

[translation] Frozen Teardrop, Requiem of Chains III



inchoate-oeuvre.livejournal.com/4590.html



NOTE: the raw text had double "greater than/less than" signs around the MS names, I've changed those to {} so the names will not disappear in LJ.

MC File 3 (Part One)

"This device shows the pilot the future of both himself and his opponent..... the future I ought to have chosen didn't exist. If, when you use it (lit: ride it), you see the same result as I did, then let's bid farewell to this world together....."

"Why was this made?"

"I believed continuing to fight was the significance of the human existence. However, I couldn't find the answer there [ALT: that wasn't the answer]. My 'fight' has finished but the solution must be found in the act of battle. As a mobile suit to do so, a {gundam} is thought to be most suitable. I want the best for the 'victors' and the 'defeated.' This is the machine that will make that possible."

"You intend to make a God?"

"Perhaps..... as long as the soldier possesses an unadulterated/pure will/volition, this machine is capable of eliminating indecision/delusion..... a soldier with no indecision is a sublimely beautiful [thing]..... In a way, (you could say) that [kind of] existence is the closest to being a god."

AC 195 Luxembourg
Treize & Heero

"There are [certain] conditions [that must be fulfilled] to bring about complete peace. One [condition is] the elimination of all weapons. Another is to remove the will to fight from the people. And yet another is---

AC 195 EVE WARS
Miliardo

MC-0022 Next Winter

My name is Father Maxwell. Father Maxwell who may run and hide but doesn't lie. At the Preventer base at the Martian north pole, Sally Po's daughter Kathy was wearing the virtual visor and experiencing the past of 'Zechs Merquise.'

"Hey....." called Master Chang, the head of the Preventer's Mars branch and commander in charge. "We've received a report from your son..... seems as though they succeeded in making off with Prometheus....."

"Huh, that's not good..... should have expected as much from Quatre's sister."

"..... they're bungling idiots," Master Chang clucked his tongue as he muttered. Times like that were made for cracking jokes.

"Maybe it would have been better to have whipped our old bones into action."

"We should have....."

"But there's just your mobile suit here at this base, right?"

"Yes..... I haven't used it yet but I'm confident I can pilot it."

"Gimme a break..... this isn't our battle." And now, the PPP ((Perfect Peace Program)) had been put into motion, we couldn't make any rash actions 215/3/7. The only one who could stop it now what Heero Yuy. "But 'Cyrene Wind' is fighting."

"That guy can't forgive himself (for the crime he committed). Let's just do it how we want to do it." I thought of the guy who was going by the name "The Wind of Cyrene." How many years ago was it when I had met up with him again---

MC-0017 First Summer

Around that time--- I was with my partner, a 150cc (large scale) bike and touring Mars to my heart's content. I wasn't the kind of guy to stay in one place. Among the hoverbikes and tricling [note: just a transliteration of the Japaese] that were popular, I still preferred a two-wheeled vehicle for tackling the rough roads, and if they called me a crazy son-of-a-gun, well, so what? Under the small, glaring sun, I cut across the (dilapidated) Mars terrain and the wind, gritty with sand, was blowing in from the West was just to my liking. I cal myself 'father' but I've yet to do a single thing like a [real priest] and I had no desire of going to a moldy, old church. Concealed under my black clothes was my shotgun and I can't remember just how many rowdy outlaws I've killed. To be frank, it might be better to say my occupation was 'bounty hunter.' I wore a ten gallon hat low over my eyes with bravado and coming to a little town smack in the middle of the desert 明るい内から and had a bourbon or tequila and passed the time playing crooked cards; that night I bought a girl but when I made a couple jokes, she dumped me [and I went to the bar?]. Mars was, to me, the best place to get your fill of [both] freedom and ruin. One day, I dropped by 'Cyrene,' a small para-terraforming town in the big desert to the north of Marineris Gorge. My air clean oil filter was on its last legs. Obviously, riding through dust storms for five hours has the [filter's] intake all clogged up. Since my partner was a two-wheeler, I had to take good care of her 216/1/1<.

"So this is Cyrene....."

Even though it was enclosed in a dome, the town was a lawless wasteland where dust clouds roamed. I parked my partner in front of the bar, went inside and took a seat at the counter.

"Bourbon..... if you got Turkey [#1], I'll buy you a [glass], too." As soon as I'd ordered, a shot glass of 'fire water' came sliding down the counter top to me. "I heard there's a colonel in town....."

The bar tender drained his tequila and, turning pale, indicated a table in the back with a shaky finger. At a round table there, four men were (besieged) in a game of poker. I knew [at a glance] that the 'colonel' was the one with his back to me. Ever since I'd entered the bar, I could feel as air of impending violence and [how he had] consciously not shown a single unguarded moment to [me at the] counter. I knew there was a gunman called Laphraig Pete [#2] in town. I put my money on the counter and got up from my stool. He was a former/crooked serviceman and [the folks round here] nicknamed him 'Colonel.' Actually, he'd been something like a sergeant. I stood to the side of their table and used my fist to gently nudge the fat, stupid looking guy sitting way in the back out of his seat.

"You!"

Fatty McStuperson tried to object after I'd done him the kindness [of taking his seat]. His voice was just as annoying as I'd imagined it would be, so I aimed my shotgun at him and had my finger on the trigger, but I didn't intend to kill

him. But since I hated [a lot of] noise, I thought I'd blow his head off if he [so much as] tried to speak again. He was a fat, stupid, horse-voiced man but he [knew enough] to stay quiet. He left the joint quiet-like as I lit a cigarette. Sitting right in front of me was the one called Colonel, Laphraig. All the other poker players left in a big hurry.

"F-Father Maxwell?"

Guess my nickname was known even out here in the sticks. Seems I'm a little famous. Laphraig glared at me with blazing eyes. (But) it was my style to answer a question with a question. I blew out a large amount of smoke and asked, "You know about the Cyrene School?" Looking at the cards lying on the table, I saw that every hand was shit. Well, the pair of fours and fives were better than what the fat-ass who had been sitting here had had. "In ancient Greek philosophy..... it's a kind of hedonism derived from Socrates. It's related to utilitarianism and seems it was called 'Pig Philosophy' for a time."

"Wh-what are you on about?..... you want to give me a sermon?" He asked another question. I decided to (quit my style) and ignore it. As I pressed my cigarette into the ashtray, I continued speaking.

"In Cyrene-ism, pleasure is akin to good, pain is apparently evil..... I don't now for sure, but I hear a certain philosopher of the Cyrene school put out the ultimate pleasure conclusion 217/1/16.

"I have no idea what you're talking about."

Just then, a man stood up behind Laphraig. He had short, blonde hair and sunglasses, a jack on his shoulders and his unshaven, self-depreciating smile (lit: face) were familiar.

".....!" The man in sunglasses pressed his rifle to the back of the other guy's head [Laphraig, I believe].

"I'd say pleasure is the decreasing of pain." I knew that man's face well. "In other words, the ultimate pleasure would be the complete absence of pain..... meaning 'death'....."

"Wh-who the hell are you....."Laphraig put both hands up, "Are you another friend of the Father?"

"No..... I'm a friend of a man you killed: Elv Honneger." We could see his face turn deathly pale. It looked like he remembered something. I then said to my old acquaintance:

"Hold up, this guy's mine.

"I'm not after the reward for this guy..... I'm just after something he had had with him....."

Laphraig's teeth were chattering. I felt a twinge of sympathy for the poor bastard; so I gave him some advice, "Hey, Colonel..... you're wanted 'dead or alive.' It's for your own good to speak your peace and do it honestly."

"Th-that....."

I [decided to tell] the gibbering guy just how dangerous the [blonde] man holding the gun was, "I ain't got nothing on that guy, he's seriously dangerous..... if he's killed a man, he's killed a hundred, easy. Hundreds of thousands that is [#3]." That was a little exaggeration, but so what.

"Alright..... I'll talk!"

[The blonde] pointed the rifle to the ceiling and waited for Laphraig to talk, "....."

"Neuenheim Konzern [#4] bought it....."

"Who in Neuenheim....."

"One of the executives, I don't know who! And killing Lt. Commander Elv, that was commissioned by the guys at Neuenheim!"

"....."

"That's it, that's all I know..... I don't know where the thing is now!"

"Really....." as soon as he said that, he blew Laphraig's head off. I watched the bullet shoot out of his forehead spinning and covered in blood.

"Whoa!" If it had been anyone else sitting there, theY'd have bit the dust but I, being me, managed to avoid [getting shot, too]. "You meant to do that (lit: you want to kill me too)!"

"I can't help it if you sat across from him [ALT: I couldn't be so lucky]."

I spared a pitying look at Laphraig, sprawled face down and dead on the table and said, "The reward would have been the same even if you hadn't killed him."

"I already told you but, I'm not after a reward." An ocean of blood spread across the table. "Ever since he killed Elv, [dying] was his only option....."

"You're just as dangerous as ever, huh....."

"Hn..... you should talk, gundam pilot."

"Yeah..... since Luxembourg on Earth." That man was once called the Lightning Count, Zechs Merquise; [and now?] he was going by Miliardo Peacecraft, stateless heir, and code-named Preventer Wind---

We returned to the counter and drank to our reunion; we drank to our lives [now] being free of that off-putting sod.

"Is it really okay if I take the reward?"

"Yes..... I've heard rumors that you donate that money to the Schbeiker Orphanage."

"Well I've heard, aren't you the one who declared Mars' independence from Earth?"

"You [ought to] know that that Miliardo Peacecraft wasn't me at least..... for the most part, I'm not interested in politics."

"But the Relena Darlian inside the Little Prince [frozen capsule] is the real deal, right....."

"That's a hostage..... that's why Lucretia, no, Noin is going to the Presidential center, as a guard....."

The [bottle of] Wild Turkey was quickly drained empty.

"Shoot, I'll bite..... just who is the president of that Federal Government?"

"Dixneuf [#5] Neuenheim..... Neuenheim Konzern's managing director." My whole body got burning hot; I'd hear the name of a man I hated.

"So that's that..... thing, right?"

"There's a [big] gap, but he's Noin's blood brother."

"....."

We switched to tequila.

"So he's running a profit-making business and politics simultaneously.... strictly speaking, that's unconstitutional."

"That's why he's going by the name Miliardo..... and Peacecraft for the publicity."

"Wow..... Neuenheim's up to his same old dirty tricks." The tequila burned down my throat as I finished off my glass. I tucked that tidbit away (in my heart). [Wind] was just as good and drunk. [He] seemed far more talkative than before.

"Well....."

Well what? I wanted to ask but didn't. Just as lightning is fast 218/2, here was a man who would act more logically than anybody else. So if that meant fighting [at] his beloved wife's parents' home, he had the faith to see i through to the bitter end (even if it cost him his life). I thought it would be a tough row to hoe.

"Well..... what should I call you now?" I asked after downing my fifth tequila. "Maybe 'Wind' is better?"

"This town is called Cyrene, isn't it...."

"Yeah....."

"Then call me 'Cyrene Wind.'"

"You gonna be a hedonist from here on out?"

"No..... I'm sure that, in Greek mythology, [Cyrene] was the name of the dauntless sprite who got rid of the lion [#6]."

"Father, let's get going."

Standing behind us was a cute little girl about seven years old. Although [she wore] the clothes of a farmhand, she had an impression of refinement. She had well-formed facial features, but her long, unusually/unruly blonde hair hung in a braids over both her left and right [shoulders] and the freckles all over her face left a stronger first impression.

"Allow me to introduce you..... this is my offspring [#7], Naina Neuenheim."

"Nain Peacecraft! I will carry on mother's wishes as one of Relena's knights!"

"So, she's yours and Noin's?"

"My daughter, for better or worse [#8]." Naina gave a slight bow. If I had to choose, I'd say she reminded me of Relena when I'd first met her [when Fat. Max. first met Relena, that is].

"Are you an acquaintance of my father's?"

"I'm the Father..... Father Maxwell."

"He looks old, but he's younger than me."

"Blame it on Mars....." It was the price I paid for my wanderlust. I still wasn't used to the Mars Calendar, but in the two to two and a half measly years since I'd come to Mars, I'd become no different from that scruffy [blonde]. We didn't yet know what caused the rapid-on-set aging that was endemic to Mars. It seems to affect eople differently [based on] the individual and the area. I'm pretty sure that, in AC years, I'm only just in my thirties [#9]. At any rate, while wandering all over Mars, the difference in my age ended up not mattering a lick.

"Meeting here is some kind of fate..... but I do have a request to ask of you."

I snapped out of my alcohol buzz, "I'm not looking for trouble, yo." That's what yo get when you drink the cheap stuff 220/1/18. "Well, unless it [comes with] a reward."

"Could you arrange for Naina to stay at the Schbeiker Orphanage?"

"What! Why, father?"

"This is the end of the line..... my next trip isn't going to be like the others."

If he really was going to take on Neuenheim Konzern, it would be too dangerous to take his daughter.

"I'll do it. It'll be a long trip, but I'll get her to Hilde."

"I wont go. I will go wherever you go, father!"

"I am the wind of Cyrene..... come what may I will come back for you."

"But....."

"Have I ever broken a promise to you before?"

"No....."

"Then trust me and go with him."

Naina's characteristically Peacecraft blue eyes filled to the brim with tears, "I understand."

"I'm sorry."

"I'll be strong, just as you taught me."

Father and daughter hugged each other tight, reluctant to be parting.

"Oh god....." I just might have gotten wrapped up on something untoward. "But you know, I can't drive [this] drunk..." I ordered another tequila, put the bottle to my lips and faceplanted into the counter [#10]. This was the only way I could be nice to people 220/2/6<. "Let's leave..... tomorrow afternoon..... good..... night....."

The afternoon of the next day, when Naina was completely prepared for the trip, she [and I] left the saloon and there, outside, lay the bodies of the poker guys and Fatty McStuperson.

"This appears to be a send off from my father..... please put [the bounty: towards travel expenses."

Somehow, while I'd been sleeping, Laphraig's gang had returned for revenge and Cyrene Wind had finished them off. These guys' had also had a reward as Laphraig had, but i'd let them go as they were just small potatoes. Still, many a little makes a mickle [#11], and I'd get a pretty penny for all of these guys. I decided to take it; it was a decent amount for travel expenses or even a donation to the Schbeiker Orphanage. And farewell to that nasty bloody [scene]. And then, there was the problem of how cheap their lives were, no matter how many 220/3/9-10<. And young miss Naina being entirely unperturbed by [the murders], that was all I could expect from the daughter of Cyrene Wind. Whether she was used to it or she had just accepted her fate didn't change the fact that she was a dauntless, pitiable girl. And--- This kind of scene was par for the course; Mars was a world where a man had his fill of freedom and devastation.

MC-0017 Next Summer

Naina sat in the back seat as we crossed the Martian continent [#12] East and further East. When we crossed the long river at Marineris ravine, we used mud tires. For the vast deserts, we used paddle tires. The fins were ruined immediately, so we had to go to para-terraforming towns several times for repairs.

"I've never seen anyone nowadays stupid enough to travel across Mars on a bike like this," I was told everywhere I went. But what did they know? Surely not the joy that can only be tasted by touring [ALT: Surely not the kind of joy that can only be experienced by touring on the back of bike].

We crossed the equator and went south. We'd gotten within a few dozen kilometers of the Lanagrin Republic where Hilde ran the Schbeiker orphanage. But it wasn't my reunion with good old Hilde that was running through my mind, it was Neuenheim Konzern who held the destiny of the young lady sitting behind me in his hands. Even I had cleaned up space waste as a former member of the Space Sweepers. I (intended) to have as much common sense as the next guy. I'm sure I remember Neuenheim Konzern establishing his business at the end of the AC era. The for-profit business's name meant 'New House' in German. In order to shake off the chronic economic changes [suffered by an] impoverished, exploited (little) Earth, [the Neuenheim Konzern] developed new markets of economic activity and continued supportive activities to bolster the citizens of space. At the start of the AC era, a permanent space station was completed and that serves as the archetype for the space colonies. It wouldn't be saying too much to call the Neuenheim's transference of resource satellites from the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter and using that as the construction by which to build the space colonies a great deed 221/2/13-15. So it's only natural that [he] acquired special permission [to use] basic techniques [to build colonies] and with one colony complete, his business was set up to rake in the dough hand over fist. Conversely, [his] possession of those profits, in fact, caused space developments and colony construction to be slower than usual [ALT: in fact, caused space exploitation]. Proof of this can be seen when Neuenheim Corporation's patents (vanished) around AC 130 and another explosive colony-building rush started. Neuenhiem's company, whose standard operating procedure was first and foremost what could be called (marketplace mechanism-ism) and utilitarian profit marketing, was more interested in realizing the planetary reform plan, aka the "terraforming project," than space colony development which was held up by the loss of the patents. Selected as the first target was this here Mars. The development and dome-shaped, airtight residences and releasing man-made freon to hasten atmospheric change with the greenhouse effect, even the space elevator that connected Phobos to Mars for the sake of more efficiently making use of materials, was one part of the plan. By the speech President Miliardo ((actually Dixneuf Neuenheim)), where he went so far as to pro-rate the Mars [century] calendar dating back to the completion of the para terraforming, stunk to high heaven of a substantially disagreeable company 223/3/14. Well, Mars turned out to be hard to sell. Being well accustomed to Earth, [not many were inclined] to move to Mars with its weak atmospheric pressure and only one third of Earth's gravity. It was the same reason the lunar domiciles failed. The Earth and the colonies around her were plenty. Also, Mars was physically too far away. (However,) around that time territorial disputes broke out all over and it was manufacturing mobile suits and other weapons more than space development that bore profits. At least, in my memory, resource satellite MO-VII crashing into the Argyre field in Mars' southern hemisphere- in AC 187 I think- couldn't really have been a chance occurrence, could it? I'm betting Neuenhiem did that intentionally. I think it was deliberate because it was a little too convenient to the development of Mars that that satellite contained Europa algae. That was even more suspicious and crooked than me! Well, the president of the company at the time was Noble Neuenheim [#13] ((Noin's father)) and this is what he said:

"[The MO-VII falling] isn't anywhere near planetary-scale destruction. This was far more humane than those who trade in people's lives for a profit ((here, he was pointing to the Romefeller and the Barton Foundations)). Action taken for the sake of future generations will [surely lead to] the greatest well-being for the greatest number of people."

That was a typical (market mechanism-ist) way of thinking; it make me sick. There's no reason for [them?] to record

these things and that was all must my conjecture but I [thought I was] right on the money. Well, the core makeup of people who came to Mars consisted mostly of liberalists who felt 'total pacifism' was too constricting and utilitarians who [had] shaken up the market cultivation: all the rest were Earth's undesirables: outlaws and hooligans. On top of that, they did just as they pleased out in the sticks away from the long arm of the law. Owing to that, to the powerless (lit: authority-less), penniless weak who hated fighting, Mars definitely became a disaster area 222/2/2-3. Particularly for women and children, that disadvantageous combination was pretty high and with riots and terrorism all over the place, there was no decrease in the numbers of war orphans or prostitutes. There was no hope and no dreams for those who weren't preferred. On the other hand, if you just had confidence in your strength and nerve, you could sing the praises of freedom 222/2/4. For a guy like me, it was my kind of place.....

A familiar hill came into sight. It looked exactly like a Bactrian camel [#14]. Soon as I crossed that camel, I'd be at the Schbeiker Orphanage. Usually, I'd take the hill in a double jump, but since I was riding tandem this time, I decided not to. Taking the pace down a notch, I eased [the bike] up and down the hill and again for the mountain. As I'd never [taken it so easy coming over camel-back], it seemed as though Hilde didn't realized my partner [bike] and I had arrived.

"What? Father?"

The eight orphans surrounding Sister Hilde were having a late lunch.

"Yo, everybody. How ya doin'?" Hilde had taken over the orphanage, and church also, from me quite a while ago. She was still young and beautiful in her own way; I wish she'd forget about (being stuck me/us) and [find a nice guy from a] middle-class family to marry into. But I wasn't so lucky. Seriously, I've never seen anybody work as hard as I do. By the way, the government of this planet taxes churches. That in itself wasn't special or anything. But we don't get welfare 222/3/12, either. The Duo Orphanage or Maxwell Church would have been good [names] but using the name of a wanted man (fugitive) and I knew how much those guys at the tax office would overcharge/harass 222/3/14 us. So that's why we used Hilde's surname and re-christened it the Schbeiker Orphanage. What we really did was mainly raising orphans burned out of house and home from the war 222/3/12-13 and finding foster parents to take care of them, and not once did we teach our troubled lambs such boring tripe as [finding] the sacred path. I sent the reward money and the quick cash made on crooked gambling here, but it wasn't clean money having come from those bastards and I knew it wasn't the right (best) way [to earn it]. But there's no such thing as good money or bad money when it comes to feeding hungry kids, right? I wasn't in the business to be lauded by anyone so I thought it was alright. Hilde had once laughed and said:

"Once you've made up your mind, there's nothing I could say to make you change it, huh."

I introduced her to Naina. Being older than all eight of the kids, Naina was all of a sudden their big sister [figure] and had to look after them, but as long as Naina herself was okay with that, I didn't feel any particular sense of responsibility.

Sister Hilde pulled my sleeve, "Where did you pick her up? You have a loli complex or something?"

"Your language just gets worse and worse, don't it, Hilde?"

"Someone's a bad influence..... after all, it's your fault, Mr. Unenlightened, didn't you know?" 223/1/14-15....."

"I'll leave you to it..... one of these days, a guy going by the name of Wind's supposed to come pick her up."

Naina was a hit with the eight ankle biters once they warmed up to her. I took notice of one particular rugrat about four years old and looking like trouble, "Who's that?"

"He just appeared from out of nowhere recently..... he looks like you, I thought one of your women'd had him."

For a second, the faces of various women flashed through my mind but none seemed very familiar. Thinking back by his apparent age would have been when I was going with Hilde. The mean looking kid ignored me and Naina and went outside.

As Hilde watched the brat leave, she whispered in my ear, "For now, I've been calling him Duo..... when his hair gets a little longer, I'm going to braid it... I'm sure you'll be like peas in a pod."

"Don't say that, I'm still a man of the cloth. I run and hide, but I'm vestal Father Maxwell 223/2/8."

"Liar, you're always getting dumped..... you playboy!"

"Whoa, don't get your panties in a bunch..... I told you from the get-go what I was like."

"Yeah yeah....."

"One 'yeah' is enough."

"Yeah yeah yeah."

"..... " Apparently she wasn't going to listen to my warnings or my rebukes. She pretty much hated me.

Hilde clapped her hands to get the attention of the noisy brats and said, "Alright, everyone! I hear the Father is leaving! Let's give him a big, smiley send-off!!"

"Come back [soon]!" [The kids said.]

It would have been nice to have at least had the time to have a smoke but, seems like I wouldn't get a chance to relax [here]. Well, I suppose it's gotta be a bad influence on the kids to have a gangster [#15] like me hanging around.

"I'll get going right now." I went outside and when I faced my partner, the mean-looking ankle biter who looked a lot like me was fiddling uninvited with the engine.

"Oy, hey! Kid! What are you messing with?"

"I'm just really into two-wheeler bikes."

"Yeah right, as if you know anything."

"The hydraulic drive for the front wheel's been caked in mud! If you ride like that, the back wheel'll lose torque and you'll sink for real."

"I-I guess you know a thing or two." I thought she hadn't been running up to par recently.

"I cleaned it up for you..... I changed the oil filter while I was at it," said the kid who, without so much as a hint of smugness, tossed a black, sand covered filter into the trash. "It's okay that I used the [filter] that was under the back seat, right?"

"O-oh..... thanks."

The kid looked right at me and asked, "So, you're my old man?"

"Nooo way!"

"Don't our faces look alike?"

"That's just a coincidence you damn brat....." I straddled the bike, started the engine and there sure was a fine sound coming from the front. "Don't you know your mom's name or anything?" I didn't think he'd know, but I asked just in case.

"No clue, yo I've been on my own since I was born!"

"In that case, you'll be fine hereafter, too!"

"Here? The old lady won't let me cut my hair!"

"Ha ha ha..... something like a braid wouldn't leave you even if you died."

"Big whoops, idiot."

"Don't you go making Sister Hilde cry!"

"Same to you. Aren't you doing just as you please?"

"It's been real, Duo!"

"Later, Father Crapswell."

I revved the bike up and beat the light fantastic out of there. I decided to take camel back mountain in a double jump and didn't look back. What a horrendous brat! That was my first impression [of Duo].

MC-0022 Next Winter

Taking off the virtual visor, Kathy turned around.

"Father, is that true?"

"Well..... it's not a lie," I said lightly. I fool around and I gamble, but Father Maxwell is honest [about doing it].

"If that's true, then who is the man [calling himself] Special Commander First Class Zechs Merquise of the Lanagrin Republic?"

"If it's not actually the man himself, not a clone and not, of course, a spare..... what possibilities can you think of?"

"A g-ghost?"

"[The real Zechs Merquise] is still alive, calling himself 'Cyrene Wind.'"

"Then a living ghost?"

"Why are you imagining all these unbelievable [impossibilities]....."

"A disguise or plastic surgery?"

"All wrong....."

"How can you be so sure?"

"I can..... long ago when my bride boarded a battleship called Libra....."

Then, suddenly the emergency take off alarm for the subterranean mobile suit hanger rang out.

"Master Chang!" Kathy shouted at the monitor as she called up that reckless idiot. He was piloting the mobile suit that had been at the base.

"This is Chang Wufei!" His face and voice both were as youthful as they had been in the past. "On the observation satellite's monitor, there are four machines shown making an attack from the Lanagrin Republic!"

"Four?!"

"You mean Zechs?"

Wufei, blazing with fighting spirit, coldly declared, "The suits have been confirmed and scanned, results [show] a collation of model numbers..... OZ-03 MCIV {Virgo IV}, three; and model number OZ-13 MS {gundam Epyon}"

"Gundam....."

"So they've finally started moving out....."

"I'll make arrangements immediately for reinforcements."

"There's no need for that! I can take them out alone."

Wufei's machine was a white mobile suit with a dragon hang [?] equipped on the right arm and a beam trident for the left.

"Code name 'Nataku'..... Preventer's scramble! {epyon II} Is taking off!"

***To Be Continued

NOTES

#1 - Wild Turkey, the bourbon.

#2 - This is apparently the name of a single malt Scottish whiskey (the Laphraig, not the Pete).

#3 - Actually, Duo is saying Zechs has killed millions of people. Given the way you count in Japanese, Duo LITERALLY says "if he's killed man, he's killed a hundred. That's in tens of thousands." But one hundred ten-thousands is a million. It sounds more menacing to say a guy (zechs) has kills LOTS of people, then tack on that number is actually a power of ten, doesn't it?

#4 - Neuenheim is, as far as I can tell, a place in Germany. Konzern is apparently German for "business group" and that makes a lot of sense.

#5 - Dixneuf is French for the number 19.

#6 - Indeed, Cyrene is the DAUGHTER of the king of Lapiths, she was caught fighting a lion by Apollo and he whisked her off to some part of Africa which bore the name Cyrenaica (named after her) which is in modern day Libya. Pleased to note: the raw text uses the genderless "sprite" or "fairy."

#7 - the kanji of the raw text says "sprite" or "fairy" but Sumizawa specifies the reading is "Cyrene." Zechs is definitely referring to his daughter, however.

#8 - Literally, he says Naina is his "good for nothing daughter" but I'm chalking this up to Japan's typical introduction rules that mandate one must humble oneself (or one's family, etc.).

#9 - And being only just in his thirties in AC years when it's MC-0017 means that five MC years later (or about ten

AC years), he'd be entering his forties when Heero is awakened and Katrine steals Prometheus and Kathy is getting brought up to speed on the VR thing.

#10 - I haven't been to enough bars to know, but it seems like you couldn't get a BOTTLE of tequila (especially considering they'd already had five shots of it). I HAVE had tequila in Japan and it comes in shots, which I assume is the norm. And finally, why does he faceplant into the counter? Maybe he just puts his head down on the counter...

#11 - I've never heard that expression, but it's apparently out there and apparently British? Just in case it's not obvious enough from context, Duo's saying "several small sums add up to one big sum."

#12 - Well, I can't find anything that names specific continents on Mars since there aren't actually oceans on Mars. None of the plains have a name with a pronunciation that might match the Japanese phonetic transliteration as near as I can tell, so I guess Sumizawa's just saying they're crossing "Mars." I suppose it's possible that particular continent IS eponymous OR it could be "Marth" from the Fire Emblem game (courtesy of Wikipedia Japants) as I believe the creators lifted the name "Khushrenada" off some other anime that was known at the time, but that's all I got. I'm sticking with KISS for now.

#13 - I can't find much about ノーベエ on the intarwebs, but some connection to chocolate seemed more prevalent if somewhat dated. There's both a belgian company (I guess?) and a guy from Oklahoma (I guess?) named Noble.

#14 - Bactrian camels have two humps, dromedaries have one.

#15 - the raw text says "yakuza" and while it COULD be the plain old yakuza, the dictionary also says it means "no-good guy" or "gambler" and we KNOW Fat Max is a (crooked!) gambler at least and hunts down other neredowells for their reward. You can take it or leave it.

NOTE: I haven't proofread this chapter as a whole yet given a myriad of things, the least of which not being the disaster that Japan has turned into (and I am currently out of on a previously arranged vacation). I apologize for the rough areas, but I figured it would be more fun for you all to know what's basically going on than waiting at least two more weeks for me to get back into Japan (barring total nuclear meltdown).

[translation] Frozen Teardrop, Requiem of Chains III, part 2



inchoate-oeuvre.livejournal.com/5506.html

NOTE: the raw text uses double "greater than" and "less than" signs around Gundam names and some other titles. I am replacing them in my translation with {Gundam Name} so they will show up in LJ.



MC File 3 (middle)

"[Sir,] I have confirmed that four mobile suits took off from the Lanagrin Republic. Just as Master Chang said, it's definitely {Gundam Epyon} and {Virgo IV}," Kathy announced as she looked at the operation data on the virtual monitor. I wasn't a Preventer or anything, so she didn't have to be so polite to me [#0]. I took a peep over her shoulder and identified the {Epyon}. I could see there was no mistake. I was familiar with that red and black [machine]. Long ago, I'd challenged that suit to a fight. In the battle that came to be known as the "Even Wars," round the time I'd dome some preliminary skirmishes, I was sure there had been three {Virgo II}s accompanying [the Epyon]. Ultimately, I'd been left with the impresison [they] were hard to deal with.

"Sooo, their goal is there."

"Their course has taken a big detour to the southwest," Kathy said as she worked with images on several simulators. "In that direction is..... Mt. Olympus."

Just as I'd thought, [they weren't heading for] Chryse or Elysium Island.

"Shall I inform Heero Yuy and Duo Maxwell?"

"When will Wufei rendezvous with those guys?"

"According to the calculations, in thirty Mars minutes."

"Oh..... for now, it might be a good idea to tell Captain Sakai of the Voyage."

"Understood....."

She responded to every [little] thing politely.

"As soon as that's been taken care of, I'll return to viewing the files. Father, why don't you take a seat on the sofa and rest."

Did I look like that much of a grandpa? I still thought of myself as being young. For the record, I'm younger than your mom. Those words make it all the way to my throat but [instead: I swallowed them and changed the subject, "Given the circumstances, you should put off on watching the files."

"But....."

"Kathy..... is it possible to watch Wufei (and the others') fight in real time?"

"Maybe, if I hacked the Mars Federation Army's surveillance satellites....."

That was probably no easy task no matter how [good] a preventer you were. To [successfully hack it] without getting caught was applause worthy. It was certainly impossible for the average hacker, and practically impossible for even me or Heero. For that silent brat Phobos or Miss Katrine, if they had the time, it might be doable. That's how tight the

Federation Army's security satellite's security is. If she could do it by the time Wufei and Zechs made contact, I'd reward her with a lecture.

Me, by the way-- so far, my life had been boring as shit but I'd chosen to live it till the end. He'd probably tell me "Your life's not worth curving the bullet." That guy..... he thought that that too-heavy responsibility which Heero Yuy had been made to shoulder [was something] he had to see through to the very end. That's what friends do. Even if he doesn't think so himself. [His?] ties to Heero didn't begin now. As such, having already come this far, [he?] could only stick it out to the end. [#1]

I might look really old, but inside I was the same as I'd been as a kid, and with a little doping, I wouldn't lose to a couple squirts. I wasn't the fool hardy idiot who'd just blown outta here, but I was confident I could easily handle a gundam and I thought I could do it better than he could. From the get go, I'd had no intention of having a kid in the pilot seat of my partner. Except that now, my partner was no where to be found.

I had an interval of thirty minutes. I wanted to tell you a story from a little while back. Speaking in Mars years, that'd be around nine years..... no, ten years ago.

I'm gonna use the MC calendar for conveniences' sake hereafter, but actually, at that time, rotation based on a twenty-four hour [days] leaves you with thirty seven extra minutes.

That's "midnight plus thirty seven."

That was a pain in the ass. At the time we used [a system] called "Mars Time" and each hour was one minute thirty-five seconds [longer than the AC hour #2] but it didn't last long. Leap seconds or whatever, time moves on no matter how you measure it. Mostly, the guys who wanted "freedom" and thought time, the past, history, beliefs and whatnot were a bother, they left old Earth for the "New Earth" and had no reason to stick to the AC calendar. Over on Earth, they had a reason to hold their order and tradition in high regard, so [we here on Mars] wanted to take care of our own "yard stick" and "history." It was a big responsibility that was thrust upon us, but we accepted it. History, economics, exchanges between Earth and Mars were practically nonexistent, we the citizens of Mars (Martians) honestly just wanted to be left alone.

Well, at any rate-- it was around twenty years ago Earth time that this moldy old story starts.

MC-0012 FIRST SPRING

I was bored.

Wasn't interested in tomorrow.

I knew the taste of alcohol and cigarettes.

I only came out at night [#3].

Colony, Earth, whatever.

Whatever.

Everything up until yesterday had been complicated. But I still went by the name "Duo" and I still had a long braid hanging limply down to my ass.

"Names are chosen by other people, eh."

As long as I had a place to go back to, I was set. That's what I thought. But--. It was supposed to be over and yet nothing really was. The seasons went flying by in front of me, but I was at a stand still. I'd started to think that, if this was how it was gonna be, I'd have been better off in the frozen capsule like him.

"I just want to say, it's cold as hell."

He'd definitely say something like that. Ha, that made me laugh. Maybe that was when [it was]. When I thought I'd break it off with Hilde Schbeiker, when I'd been running hot and cold (lit: been pointlessly/inefficiently living with Hilde), Hilde beat me to the punch.

"Sayonara, Duo..... I'm sick of you."

What the hell? I mean, why wasn't it me saying that?

"You know, it shows on your face right away."

"Huh?!"

"You really are hopeless..... always looking back." She (abused) my hair with a sharp tug, "What is this braid? I don't now if it was Mister Helen or Sister Miren but is it [really] that much fun? Do you think it's cool?! I think it looks like crap!!"

"Ow, ow! OUCH!"

"So long! Say hello to your buddy Solo or whatever his name is."

I spat on the floor and, by the time I'd thought to slam the door closed, Hilde was already gone. Even a guy like me was hurt 282/1/14. I was angry at myself for not fighting back [verbally]. My drunken vigor helped.

"Wait, oi!" I went after Hilde. "I told you to wait! Oi!" She started running to get away. I caught up and when I grabbed her shoulder, she gave a quick turn and grabbed my arm instead. "!" Without a second to even think, I was in the air and thrown down to the ground.

"I used to be with OZ! You can't beat me!" She turned me over 282/2/1-2 in a stance unique to a soldier.

"Don't get within 9.46 petameters of me!"

"9.46 peta?" I later found out that 9.46 petameters is about the distance of one light year.

"If you do, be ready for me to file a restraining order (lit: sue you as a stalker)!"

If peta was [the same as] kilo, then it was nine trillion four hundred six billion kilometers..... so she hated me astronomically. I should just warp the hell out of there [is what she meant]. "I have a friend in the colonies who's a lawyer and it'd be so easy to get the papers."

She rattled on as I stood up and as I rubbed my throbbing backside, I yelled out loudly, "Alright! Alright already. I won't follow you any more, just go away."

"Then I'll go easy on you..... be thankful I'm being so generous!" Hilde turned on her heel and was gone, just like that. I was sad to see her go. Why? Was it just because that matched how I felt or was I just conceited enough to think she still loved me 282/2/5-7<. Either way, for me, it felt like the worst way to break up. I felt like crap. [My] stupid braid was pitiable [ALT: I was one wretched, braided idiot.] I was a dimwit and a dullard and completely uncool. But I thought "uncool" seemed just about right for me.

MC-0012 NEXT WINTER

I landed on Mars. It was close to the foot of Mt. Olympus. Although one light year was impossible, I had gone as far away as I could. Not that I was afraid of legal action. It'd be easy to break out if they caught me. As long as I wasn't wanted (lit: hated), this way was the best way. It was also perfect for getting off the bottle. I used my wanderlust to

[handle] my grudge 282/3/13. Staying in one place made me antsy. So the endless wilds of Mars suited me far better than the cramped colonies. I collected a light engine and parts at a junk [yard] and while I was putting together an off-road bike for [exploring those] wild lands, I thought suddenly of a question as I wiped the sweat off my forehead with my oil-covered arm:

"Huh, was Mars always this warm?"

I thought the life system of the para terraforming dome was on the fritz. I left the dome and was surprised. A little leaf beetle was flying. The ocean was off in the distance. Clouds floated by. You could go on forever without a helmet. I took a deep breath and choked a little on the sandy air that spread through my lungs.

"Woow..... chalk one up to the human race! [We] really did terraform Mars!"

I was in total admiration. The small sun was shining. Phobos was moving in the opposite direction [from everything else].

"That's just really something."

I suddenly thought of something then: what was man's greatest legacy? [I knew] it wasn't this world or the colonies at least. The pyramids and Roman Coliseum weren't it either. The human race wouldn't change all that much with or without ancient remains. It wasn't that kind of structure, it was something more (conscious) of the essence of man. [Was it his] possibility or [his] ever-expanding pioneering spirit[?] I didn't really know, nothing I could think of really fit 283/1/3-4<. Mankind in and of itself is something to behold but our existence was rubbish. It wasn't for (a guy like) me to know if I should look at the scene before me as the light of a new hope or as the dark cloud of a future of continuing endless ruin. Honestly, what of it? 283/2/5

Tears spilled down my cheeks. I wondered why [I was crying] at a time like that. I certainly wasn't a kid and neither was there any reason for the scenery to move me [to tears]. What the hell were these tears? Was it sadness or vexation or even happiness? Loneliness. This carefreeness and freedom that were supposed to suit me best somehow left me feeling miserable and lonely.

"....."

But I swear, even then I didn't think about Hilde.

"Ahhh....." I gave a huge yawn. After stretching my back, I went back to the workshop. I had to retune/rebuild the engine all over again. At first, I'd thought I would have to tour in an astrosuit, but I'd be happy to get more horse power. Thinking back about it now, I might have been able to have made it in time.

MC-0014 NEXT WINTER

I got on my partner ((an 800 cc two wheel bike)) and had me some Mars touring. In a few months, the immigrants coming from Earth increased dramatically. They'd probably gotten tired of living the quiet life over there. You could immigrate by [taking the] Mars (endemic) preventative vaccine and a simple document check. There was no reason not to smuggle yourself in, though 283/3/11. Actually, that's what I had done. There was nothing to it when you got accustomed to the one-third gravity 283/3/13. It felt good to be outside without a helmet. I bet everyone just wanted "freedom." There were times when tens of thousands of immigrants came in one season. That was how the fishy Federal government got started-- [because all these people had been attracted to Mars]. The increase in population brought with it an increase in fighting. When that happens, the [list] idiots who mistake "self indulgence" for "freedom" goes on and on. If it's just a scuffle, the police or the sheriff can do something, but for the guy who goes as far as terrorism and (disputes), he can't be (so easily) taken care of. Anyhow, an armed force was established. It was imperative to save the peace. Since Earth's "Peace Law" didn't condone the maintenance of an army, it was (within the limits of assumption) that the Mars Federation could only declare it's independence.

I shouldn't have done it, but I'd [gone riding] at full tilt one winter night on Mars. It was probably in the middle of the night, at "midnight plus thirty seven." I'd had a road accident. An iceberg, frozen solid, is serious bad news for a (two wheeler) bike. If [I had had #3.5] four wheel drive, I just would have slipped, but a motorcycle falls over onto its side. It was a picture perfect blunder 284/1/15, and I was an idiot. My spiked tired weren't worth shit. That little bit of alcohol I'd had (lit: the bit of alcohol in my stomach) wasn't too good, either. I [just] wanted some "fire" to warm up my frozen body, but that was the fatal [mistake]. The handle bars swayed left and right and the light from my headlight [intermittently] lit up a rock wall. I can't remember what I slipped on. I might have been avoiding some obstacle. All I know was that it wasn't a banana peel. Before I knew it, I'd taken a fantastic spill 284/1/3<; my partner had crashed into the rock wall and was going up in flames. Thanks to my helmet and protector, my head, spine and internal organs were fine but my left arm and both my legs had been broken [#4]. It was feeling my age more than the broken bones that caused a far more acute pain. It was sad seeing my partner burning away.

"DAMNIT, this shit huuurts!" Cry or scream, no one came. "Gimme a break, bastard!" I railed at the Mars winters and [my] advanced aging at the hands of the Mars endemic.

It began to snow.

I could smell my self loathing 284/2/11. It was ridiculous to shout at myself. When a huge clump of snow looking like a snot ball fell into my gaping pie hole, I decided to shut up.

"Angggg.... guh." Clenching my teeth hurt. But I could have been on the verge of dying 284/2/11<.

"Owa---! Somebody heelp!"

It snowed harder.

The wind turned colder.

That's what I got for my flailing around. It was time to pay the price for [a lifetime of?] having had my own way with one thing and another. I was doomed to die like that. Then, disappointingly, I lost consciousness.

In my swiss cheese memory [of the event], it seems like I remember seeing a circus hover-truck. Apparently, some busy body had found me.

"Just like always, huh, this kid....."

"Hn, blew himself up..... lucky no one else got caught up in it." I remembered hearing the familiar voices of that man and woman.

"Is he breathing?"

"Barely." After using [his] fist to check the breath coming from my nose, he took a whiff and spat, "seems like he was riding drunk."

"He was asking for it? Is he really [that] dumb?"

I wanted to say something back but I was only half conscious.

"You're leaving?"

"It's not like he's so [bad off] that he wave to do all sorts of stuff right now."

"Good thing you're so tough, Mr. Stupid Pants [#5]....."

"[He suffers from] something that not even death would cure." So they'd come to Mars, too, then. Earth must really have been boring. There was no reason for them to help me, but they'd at contacted a hospital that had emergency

facilities. [They were] blunt as ever. Nevertheless, I was real glad the gundam called Heavyarms wasn't there. The way he handled the injured was way too rough.

When I regained consciousness, I was in a hospital room with both my legs plastered and suspended. My flaming partner had apparently saved me from freezing to death and served as a [beacon] for the rescue team. Even with the most advanced medical treatments, the doctor said it would take two months for my old bones to fully heal. That meant [I'd still be in plaster at the start of] the new year. That was two calendar years [#6]. I swear to God I'd never drive drunk ever again. Not that I believed in God or anything. I would never do it again at any rate. But not for my sake. I decided to never ever do that again for the sake of my now-torched partner.

MC-0015 FIRST SPRING

"I'm simply stunned at your stupidity."

At the start of the year, standing before my immobile self was none other than Hilde. She had on black rimmed glasses and an expensive looking suit. The pin heels on her feet and the miniskirt looked good enough to get my heart racing. It was enough to make me wonder who it was at first, I hadn't seen Hilde in quite some time; she had changed into a beauty with brains. I was as miserable as ever, no... I was one shade more miserable, I couldn't pay the hospital bill and in the end, it was to her that I went begging.

With a little persuasion, a nurse I was on good terms with did me the favor of looking up circus groups with (older) sister and (younger) brother siblings, but they weren't anywhere on Mars. I didn't have any other acquaintances so I was at a loss. The hospital director said I could work off my debt at the hospital, but I really wasn't interested. The hospital had such excessive profits that they [had?] given me the Mars endemic vaccine even though I didn't ask for it. After all the trouble I'd gone to to smuggle it in, it was all for naught. But still, since my [rapid on-set?] aging had progressed, no doubt I'd been injected with a fake. Because my drunk driving wasn't a secret, if I was released from the hospital now, it followed that I'd be going to the big house. Prison on Mars was bad news. Apparently, once you went in, you didn't come back out. For an old man with broken bones, escape was most likely impossible. Meanwhile, Hilde had somehow gotten the information and came to see me.

"The people in the traveling Gypsy circus told me," she told me, sounding like someone truly put out. Hilde was now a librarian at the Lanagrín Republic National Library located in Mars' southern hemisphere. My face froze with nerves. There was no doubting that I was within 9.46 petameters.

"Relax, you don't have to pay me back." Unlike the outside, her inside was just like it used to be. "Because what you need is the doctor's fee." For all that I was a laid-up invalid, I had never heard such a rubbish pun [#7].

"Sorry," she said, but didn't mean it. Who ever apologized from the heart? Use as much as you can then just toss it away, right? I did get out of the hospital but my partner was ruined and I had nowhere to go. I didn't have any other choice but to sneak aboard an airline and head to the Southern hemisphere. I was alone so I could go anywhere. I was fascinated with the souther hemisphered the first time I saw it.

The one continent was all connected. This was the Mars continent, the biggest on Mars?! Damned if it wasn't the perfect place for off-road touring.

I thought it was embarrassing but I rolled into Hilde's place in Lanagrín. She was living in a spiffy high-rise apartment. Seems like a secretary at a library made pretty good money.

"Oh well! You have pay for the squid with your own quid."

Earn greenbacks on the red planet..... even without the corny pun [#8], I'd have gone along with that. At the center of this country was the Lana Green Sea and the high-rise buildings lining the ocean fronted megalopolis prospered, but along the perimeter of the ocean, quiet port towns dotted the way; they made me think it wouldn't be a bad place to

live. None of that mattered to me. As I looked for a part-time job as a bar tender at a bar in one of the port towns, I earned some cash (as hired muscle [e.g. a bouncer]) and swindling people gambling on the side; I saved up my pocket money and started thinking about rebuilding my partner. Next time, if I wrapped wire rope around mud tires, I thought that would grip even on an iceberg. I found her on the way home after she was unearthed at a junk yard. They were selling the engine of an off-road bike designed for Mars, the Ares Hornet ß III 1500 cc[#9], albeit used. I [knew] it would be easy to steal, but a man has his pride and I had to buy it with the money [I'd earned] from honest labor. That was just common courtesy for [what would be] my new partner. Just you wait, Ares! From the next day, I started working in earnest (lit: with hope). I seriously worked. Without any persuasion from women 287/2/7, I really went after [all the] roughs and used some serious moves. The price skyrocketed several times [but if I saved] just a bit more and I'd have enough to buy the Ares engine.

"There really is no cure for your stupidity, huh!" The piggy bank I'd been using to save [for Ares] was picked up by Hilde. "Don't you know how old you are? [ALT: Don't you think you're too old to ride a motorcycle?]"

"Give it back! I've finally filled it up, its MY piggy!"

"[I think] I'll be taking this as a fee for having to put up with you for so long!" She busted the piggy bank open and took all that as inside it.

"....."

There was no love.
I wasn't loved.
I intrinsically didn't 'get' love.
But I wanted Ares.

"Let's get married."

"Huh?" Hilde said and turned around.

"I love you, let's get married!"

I'd give up alcohol, smokes, and women.
I'd cut my hair.
I'd give up the name Duo.
All's fair in love and war [#10].

Really, I'd do whatever it took. I wasn't going to give up on the Ares Hornet ß III engine, no matter what. I wanted to ride across the endless Mars continent.

"Marry me, Hilde! I never noticed (until now) [that] I've loved you all along!!" If I just had a marriage license (lit: registration) then I could combine our assets. If I could just get my partner [made], the bike was as good as mine 287/3/12. Frankly, I had a hunch I'd be rejected. But it looked like saying I'd cut my hair had worked.

"Alright, if you're gonna cut your hair." I pulled Hilde [by the] arm and took her to a church in the port town. I had lent a large sum to the elderly priest there. I'd won it at poker. I'd won because I didn't advocate "God's Path" 287/3/16-20 [#11]. We got the wedding performed there, cheap as free. The ceremonial cutting of my braid was also held there.

Sorry, Sister Helen.
So long, Solo.
This is for my new partner.
Forgive me.

I don't need a blessing. I didn't expect a promising future. I wasn't a pacifist or a bachelor. And I sure wasn't a consequentialist [#12]. This was also goodbye to dragging my past [around with me]. I played along for two or three months. Of course, I thought that was the hardest I'd worked in my life. I also did manual labor in MTFs ((Mars terraforming suits)) used for public works. It got around that I was hired muscle and a cheating gambler so I couldn't make much money doing that anymore. [Instead], I got into handling the smuggling of goods that the government had taken it upon itself to declare illegal by bullying the weak 288/1/12. The money wasn't half bad. Piggy Junior got nice and fat and all that would go towards my partner, version 3.0.

My first partner was [Gundam Deathscythe}. Actually, I'd stolen that, too. I had it remodeled and it became {Gundam Dethscythe Hell}. He was a super cool partner, but there was no way to use him outside of war so I (crushed) him [#13]. It was incredibly difficult and I'd heard grinding here and there [#13!!!]. I could hardly keep him [after the war], so I'd gone off to [the/my?] final battle in Brussels with my guns blazing. My second [partner] got junked the other day. This one was number three. I'd finally saved enough and busted open Piggy Junior. I got all the parts for my partner together and in the storehouse behind the church, I was a regular grease monkey putting her together. When I tried to make her roar, she didn't disappoint.

"Hey, Maxwell," the old priest said.

"What's up, Gramps?" I was in a fantastic mood.

"Looks like I can't pay off my debt. [#11]"

"Oh, don't worry about it. I'm just about finished with my girl, so let's call it even."

"I can't let you do that."

"When I was a kid, I owed a great deal to [another] church..... so I don't need anything."

"But"

"I may be a fake and shady, but I don't take money from the poor, that's me, Du- Pig Maxwell." I sat astride my partner, hit the accelerator. "Catch ya later, Gramps!" I headed to the wilderness at full throttle.

"YAHOO!"

I had a feeling I was forgetting something, but there wasn't supposed to be any past for me to look back on. I didn't even have that troublesome braid. I thought I heard a woman's voice [scream], "You IDIOT!" but it was lost in the roaring of my bike's engine. Don't worry, don't worry. Anyway you slice it, I'm a big pig of an idiot.

MC-0016 FIRST SPRING

A year on Mars had passed and I went back to Lanagrin [for the first time since leaving]. I didn't want to get older and winter was pretty dang cold. Even with my snow tires clandestinely fashioned out of mud tires wrapped in wire rope, I sunk [into the snow] a lot. Each and every time [that happened] I called myself an idiot. Ever since, I stopped riding my girl at night in the winter and spent the night at a saloon. The alcohol and smokes had already made a comeback. When my hair got long, I cut it. I didn't need anything at Hilde's [#13.5], so I didn't go to the maritime city but headed to the port town at the foot of camelback Mountain. I dropped by Gramp's church. I was in a for a [big] surprise. Hilde was there in a nun's habit looking after God knows whose kids.

"Hey..... what happened to you?" I asked amicably. Just as soon as I said that, Hilde's face got seriously angry.

"Don't you even! Asshole!"

Suddenly, she grabbed my right arm, twisted it up my back and pressed my hand to my back. "This is all your fault!!!"

Just like that she pinned me to the ground and the (violent woman) straddled me. My protector felt the impact and inflated. Thanks to [my gear], I got through my last accident without breaking my back.

"Ow ow ow..... ow, ouch, that the hell happened?"

"That old mad died and left the church to YOU! Said to tell you his debt was settled or something!!" Said Sister Hilde, ex-librarian, ex-girlfriend, ex-OZ Space Army soldier. "Moreover, this money pit of a church is in a real FIX!!" I thought my right arm would get broken. Her kansetsu technique [#14] was no joke. "You got the God of Death on one shoulder and the God of Poverty on the other, don't ya. How'd ya like that, huh?!"

"Whaddaya want me to do?!"

"Give me a divorce! Right here, right now: divorce!"

"What?"

"What do you mean 'what'? It's because my estate's jointly owned by you that I'm in this mess!!"

Shit, ex..... I'd forgotten she was my wife.

"Why didn't you just file for divorce yourself?" I heard a snap that I hadn't wanted to hear, "OWWW!!!" A long time ago, a learned man once said: If thy right arm has broken, extend thy left. But I had no intention of doing that! I'd just broken my left arm about a year ago.

"There's these poor kids here with no place to go! And I'm supposed to just leave them to fend for themselves?!"

"I don't know. Why not!"

"Where did this bad guy come from, you jerk?!" I thought about saying the non-resisting old man with the broken right arm was pretty poor [as in pitiable], too. There was a load of other stuff I wanted to say, too, but I kept quiet. Because Hilde grabbed my chin and made me flip over 289/2/11-12<. If I stayed like that, she could get my spine.

"U-uncle! I give up!" I surrendered. She had a flawless victory. With my powerless, dangling right arm, I signed the divorce papers. When I signed 'Pig Maxwell,' she blew up at me and called me an idiot. When I resignedly wrote 'Duo,' she took a jab at me, [accusing me] of dragging it out.

"Well, what should I write?" Hilde said a name I'd never heard before: James Clerk Maxwell. I gathered it was apparently the name of a Scottish physicist a long time ago and according to (our) family registry, my official name. For the marriage license, Hilde had taken it upon herself to give me that name. As [she] told me how to spell it out one letter at a time, I [was struck] by this (desperate/frantic) thought: it's strange how she's telling me what the letters are. I had a strange feeling. It was like being wrapped in warmth, like being in the palm of a gentle hand. It wasn't a distinct [feeling]; I'd never experienced anything like it until then. It was different even from the warmth of Sister Helen who loved me [ALT: who treated me with affection]. Hilde's ferociousness just before seemed like (a lie). I felt something akin to maturity.

"Something's different about you, eh."

"Really?"

I thought it was because she quit wearing the black rimmed glasses.
I thought it was because [she wore] a nun's habit.

No, on second thought, it was because I'd been gone for one year, two Earth years. But something was different. I didn't want to say 'angel' or 'goddess' because there were absolutely no similarities there. In the back of my mind, the (key)word 'mother' popped up. But I immediately smothered (lit: denied) it. I'm not even supposed to know what

[mother'] is because ever since I was born, for as long as I can remember, I've been on my own. After that, I had to write an IOU for a hefty sum. Also, I had to promise to pay off my debt to the Schbeiker Church in the form of donations. She didn't say it like an order, but [her words] had the power to make me obey, [it was] as if I'd been put under a spell. On top of that, I was handed a new nickname, Father Maxwell, and a black priest's outfit. We were divorced, so I had no clue why I was being put under Hilde's restrictions, but I decided to go along with it. As a motorcyclist, I'd do whatever to protect my backbone and spine. Until my right arm healed, I'd have to stay at the church, orphanage, whatever that place was. The kids thought that I, with my arm in a sling, was amusing; I got sick of their incessantly dogging my every step. Finally the bandages came off and when I thought the break was healed, Hilde suddenly came up and slapped me on the back. There was a pain that made me imagine that, if I had looked under my shirt, I'd see a red, hand-shaped mark.

"Okay, happy trails!"

Hilde was telling me to take a hike. Her smiling, happy face didn't lie. "Your arm may be better, but there's no medicine for you being you! You don't listen to a thing I say anyway!"

"Father! Have a good trip!" Even the kids had all come out and chorused a goodbye to me.

"Work hard!"

"Good luck!!"

Oh God [#15], I thought as I turned the ignition key in my partner.

A few days later... I was in a saloon at a small town. I dealt five cards [to the two of us]. My opponent was an outlaw. My hand, which I could see between the ten gallon hat and the palm of my hand, was a full house. It was the result of a trick I'd used [when I'd dealt the cards]. When I continued to aggressively raise, the outlaw folded.

"Just what was your hand?"

"Pig....."

"Yeah?"

"Sure, pig, right? Since that's what I was playing against."

"You were bluffing?!"

I grinned, like I would lie about who I was playing against [#16] 290/2/8. He stood right up and darted out of the bar, maybe he sensed my bloodlust [alt: sense the highly charged atmosphere]. Unfortunately for him, I wasn't good natured enough to let him get away that easily. I socked [it] to him out front. I fixed the aim of my beloved shotgun at the (source of payment): the back of his head. The guy stopped and turned around, shaking something fierce.

"Who are you?" asked my bounty.

At the time, I was still an easy going guy, so I answered his question seriously, "The bad guy....."

"Don't screw around!"

Anyone who would screw around in this situation was screwed up.

"Alright, you can call me Father Maxwell, the man who has been [gang]pressed into taking your life and [the] bounty [on your head] by the God of Death and the God of Poverty." Before I could finish my introduction, the coward went for his pistol, but before he could reach it, I shot him through the head with my shotgun.

Who's to say whose fault it was, I was as screwed up as a compound fracture.

Since then, I was a crooked gambler-- no, I was a bounty hunter and wandered all over, diligently donating money to the Schbeiker Orphanage ((Church)). I was Father Maxwell.

MC-0018 NEXT WINTER

Schbeiker Orphanage was also a church, so they did something like Christmas. The date, however, was perfunctory, they'd choose whatever day they wanted. Anyhow, [sing a couple of] hymns and do a couple games and call it a little party. Get a little sparkling wine and even I'd have some fun. I knew about [this year's] Christmas from the airport bank from which I'd sent my donation [to Hilde].

"You're Santa so don't forget to bring presents."

Hilde informed me in a message (sent in reply [to the donation]). She wanted to foist another act variation on me after I was already covering so many roles? But it had already been more than a year and a half since I'd left Naina Peacecraft with Hilde, so I guessed it was about time to drop by again. In Earth time, it had been three years. Hilde was grumbling about "Cyrene Wind" not showing up yet. I didn't know how she could complain, Naina seemed to be a big help. Hilde told me that that little squirt [lit: shit/crap kid #16.5] had started braiding his hair. I bust a gut laughing. If that was true, he wasn't any different from me when I was an ankle biter. "Hilde's special nuisance." 291/1/1<. I'll bet she's giving him a hard time cause she can't do the same to me. But I know the feeling. Sometimes you need a diversion when you're surrounded by horrible rug rats every day. I [could] sympathize with Duo, but I wouldn't (console) him. If a troublemaker isn't prepared to accept responsibility for all that he does, he's gonna have a tough row to hoe. Shoot, if that's the case, then he is just like me. Better not shoulder too much 291/2/10.

At a shopping mall, I bought a used Santa suit and a fake beard, too. I put the brats' too-heavy presents in a bag that I would carry over my shoulder. I got on my bike, left the airport and headed for Lanagrin, but my girl was getting older just like me and creaking in the joints. If I didn't do an overhaul with Duo, touring in the spring would be iffy. I didn't know if the brat with the bad attitude would help me out or not, but you know, if you treat a kid like a proper adult, they'll work their butts off. I don't know what happened [to him], but the kid's eyes had a (matured/experienced) sadness hiding in them. That was just like Naina. Among all the kids I'd known on Mars, that [sadness] was something they [all] had in common. They were all raised in the middle of excessive suffering and despair. It was difficult to help them and there were many of them. I'd decided my current responsibility was to help relieve them [of that pain], even if it was just the miniscule number of kids at the orphanage, and I'd do it with small gestures 291/3/3. It was a voluntary gesture out of proportion [with the need], but those bastards I killed were pretty pathetic 291/3/8-9. The gritty Mars air suited me. So I didn't need sympathy or consolation.

Camelback came into view but I didn't have the confidence to do a double jump like I had before. If I did such a stupid move on that winter night and broke my arm, I wouldn't be able to be Santa. I thought coming in on a sleigh pulled by cloned reindeer would have been a bit over the top. I heard the ankle biters singing hymns at Schbeiker Church. I gave my chest a hefty thump and when my protector had inflated, my Rotund Santa outfit was compete. I opened the door and gave a hearty, "HULLO! Merry Christmas!" While I'd been away, there'd been quite a few additions [to the brood]. Naina was the oldest and there were at least twelve kids about as old as Duo.

"Ho ho ho ho! It's Santa, guys!" I put my all into the Santa act, but it went over like a lead balloon.

"Why are you wearing red?"

"Father, did you get fat?"

"The beard and stuff really isn't 'you.'"

Everyone there including Hilde knew about Santa, but they didn't know Santa Claus's getup.

"What a bunch of kill-joys," I was sad. What was the point of having dressed up? But they were happy with the presents. It had been a long time since I'd seen their carefree smiling faces. Seemed like Duo was Captain Brat and he handed out the presents fairly. That was where the [now] grown up Naina smiled. In Hilde's black hair, there was a bit of white mixed in. Around her eyes were little traces of hardship. I'd let her indulge in a little complaining [later]. Tonight I would be sober and smoke free. In the warehouse out back, when I was taking my partner's engine apart, he showed up as I thought he would. When I didn't push him into conversation, he said,

"Totally not paying attention," and he dunked the engine parts in oil, and started cleaning them with a brush 292/1/1-4.

"Hey, thanks," I said, but he didn't answer. "Could you do this one, too?" I pushed a wooden box chock full of gears, nuts, chains, shafts, and what all over to him. "This is my personal Christmas present from me to you!" It was the ultimate toy box for a mech-nerd. It was a quiet night. Duo was an apt kid, he took the [oil] rag between his little fingers and carefully cleaned the oil caked into the nooks and crannies of the engine parts. The work went surprisingly quickly.

"Hey, about Sister Hilde," he piped up as if the easy work were boring, "did she used to be an agent somewhere?"

He asked a question so I gave him a question, that was my style, "What makes you think that?"

"That woman really knows how to hurt a guy."

"Ha ha ha..... yeah, she does." Enough to easily break the arm of a guy like me.

"You're not gonna marry her or anything?"

"Stupid! A respectable priest like myself can't marry her."

"Heh, so says the bogus priest."

"....." The brat had stinking heaps of adult information that he didn't need to know about. "You've got your own worries, thing more about yourself [and less] about other people."

"I'm alright..... I am."

"....."

"The real worry is Miss Naina..... every night she sits at the window looking out."

"Really....."

"REALLY, parents are a pain..... she's been waiting the whole time." However much freedom you look for, you can't pick your parents. The Peacecraft and Neuenheim bloodline would be a cruel and troublesome fate for anybody.

"I'm glad I'm a vagabond."

"And you're glad you were picked up by Sister Hilde, right?" I hadn't meant to comfort, but it was already out there.

"Yeah, I guess..... Sister Hilde's nice to me." Was he teasing? Was he really glad? When I was the same age as him, I [was already living on the streets], I had messy hair and swiped stuff yet somehow I managed to survive the day. I didn't mean to compare, but when I'd met Sister Helen, I was two years older than this kid. We kept working in silence. "I'm thinking....." The braided philosopher muttered to himself, "about the value of a human..... kindness and memories and that, isn't that stuff in your heart?"

"Yeah....."

"Parents are a pain but if I didn't have them, I sure wouldn't be here and if there is no value in my heart, it gets hard to know why I should keep living."

When I'd first come to Mars, I'd had similar thoughts but he in his own way came up with a solution in that little head of his. I felt like a serious discussion with my brat of a partner, "I don't oppose/object to the bit about kindness, but I wonder about the memories [#17/A]....."

"You do? I guess the memories [A] are more important."

"There's another, more difficult, word for memories [A] and that's 'recollection' [B]."

"[Geeze] I know that, it's remembering [C], right."

"Would you listen?" I decided to chatter. For me, when I was putting stuff together, I could work better if I talked while I did it. "When people die, their recollections get reset. I don't think there's any value in that. On top of that, if there's a good recollection, then there's also a I-wouldn't-remember-this-for-shit 293/1/4-5< bad memory."

"I'm sleepy....."

"Ultimately, it's more important to look forward to the future than to remember the past. I was told this by Sister Hilde but if you always drag the past around, by the time you notice, you'll have lost the ability to do anything [about it]. They say that's how you end up being ruled by sentimental weakness."

"....."

"But suppose there is value in recollections, then that would mean all human life would have equal value..... if that's right, then what I, Shinigami, have been doing until now has been just destroying what could be called man kind's inheritance/legacy, haven't I?"

Yeah..... I couldn't easily accept the kid's solution because I was still searching for the [kind of?] peace with which the dead were buried. I was being dragged around by sentimental weakness, I just didn't want to admit to my own [personal] stagnation. Meaning, even though I'd cut it off, I still had a long braid running down my back.

A half broken Madonna [#17.5] and a crushed stained glass [window].

It was a clear flashback of that scene.

The Maxwell Church atrocity.

I hadn't moved since then.

Father Maxwell, a killer and a priest.

It's me that I want to have killed, saved.

When I snapped out of it, Duo had lied down and fallen asleep.

"You'll catch a cold, yo." I thought to wake him up, but I decided to lay my red Santa jacket [lit: cape] over him and just let him sleep [instead]. At any rate, I thought I'd throw away the used [costume when I left] because it was covered in grease. It didn't mean anything to me.

The quiet, quiet night grew more silent.

I put my partner [back] together straight away.

When I got up to listen to Hilde rant--

I heard a little cry. It was surely Naina's voice. I left the warehouse and quietly checked out the grounds. I felt the trees stir. In the night sky floated [Mars'] second satellite, "Frozen Teardrop", aka Diemos. [It's light], however, wasn't enough to cut through the black darkness. Even so, when my eyes adjusted to the dark, I saw shadows moving.

Several men disappeared into the woods, carrying an unconscious Naina over their shoulders. I threw my stupid, torn red Santa hat on the ground. It was [awfully] heavy, but I slipped into my long coat, which was stocked with the tools of my trade. This was unforgivable. I feared Naina, who looked outside from the window on the second floor, had been [kidnapped]. Neither Hilde nor the other kids had noticed. That was a fine trick. I hid in the shadows and followed hot on their heels.

[I could tell] there were four men by listening to the sound of their footfalls. They seemed to be men who had received proper training. It was also [the kind of] movement that made it possible that it was a military-like organized act. This was the first time in a long time that I felt [such] excitement. I was thankful that I hadn't had any alcohol. It was like it was time for the "Professional Shinigami" to return. If they were thugs or outlaws, then it would be impossible to have [made it (lit: leadership)] this far. (In point of fact), [I imagined] they were special forces sent out by the Mars Federation or Neuenheim Konzern. The machine sounds I could just barely hear must have been Mars suits on stand-by on the other side of the forest. Not something I could fight [bare handed]. What to do? [How] could I hold my tongue, turn a blind eye and let those guys get away with Naina. No way I could. The only thing I could do was steal one of their Mars suits and put up a fight. When I cleared the forest, four Mars suits standing along the short of the "Lana Green Sea" came into view. There was also a high-speed hover craft parked (at their feet). I guessed the four men dressed in black meant to load her onto the hovercraft. That was when Naina regained consciousness and put up a token resistance. Now was my chance.

It happened when I was thinking about which suit to take. There was a dazzling flash of light. He was [there] in the flash of golden light. That machine was surely a Mars suit. I only had second to confirm, but it wasn't a Gundam and the shape wasn't like any other mobile suit.

"I've come to pick you up, Naina!" The ever-comosed voice sounded out. It was the voice of the man who called himself Cyrene Wind.

"FATHER!" Naina screamed at the top of her lungs. In the next second, three Mars suits were ripped apart. What the hell kind of weapon was he using? The explosion and billowing smoke from the Mars suits obstructed the horizon even more. Before I knew it, Cyrene Wind's brilliantly lit up mobile suit was destroying the last surviving mobile suit. That had been a close call. If I had gotten into the suit, I'd have been instantly killed.

"STOP! Niana Neuenheim is here!" shouted the guy who seemed to be the ring leader, he stuck a gun to the nape of her neck. But Naina was completely unafraid.

"You're wrong! I am Naina Peacecraft," she said cool. "Father, don't mind me!"

Then, in the dazzling light, the cockpit hatch opened and [Cyrene Wind] leisurely appeared from within, "You've grown up..... and grown [more] beautiful, Naina." The [kidnappers] stood motionless, struck dumb. For [members of] either the Mars Federation or Neuenheim Konzer, the man who'd just shown up bore a striking resemblance to their [head honcho]. In fact, they probably didn't know the other guy was a fake [#18]. It wasn't my beloved shotgun, but a sniper riffle outfitted with a scope that I pulled from my long coat.

Naina was grand, "Father! Please kill [them]."

I made to fulfill the demand. I was, after all, a 'father.' [#18.5]

BANG!

I shot the ringleader dead. There is no life which is fit to be taken 296/1/4. I, Shinigami, have so declared ergo it is not wrong. Freed from her captor, Naina ran to Cyrene Wind. The two men who chased after her and the one who made to help their fallen leader, all three of them were in my [cross hairs] and-

BANG!

BANG!

BANG!

I sniped them, too. I'd lost my touch. Using four bullets to kill four people? Before, two shots would have sufficed. Well, I was [shooting] against the light and those guys were also pros; it was immediately after my comeback, we'll leave well enough alone there. Those guys, including the four Mars suit pilots, had memories; and they were nice to other people in their time. It was just bad luck they were assigned this mission when the sprite and Cyrene Wind were reunited. More than anything else, the worst [part] was that lovely girl was going to be swept away from Hilde's and my house. If you don't want to lose what's important to you, you absolutely must not take away what's important to someone else.

"Naina....."

"Father....."

Surrounded by a beam of light, Naina and he embraced, overjoyed at their reunion. I'd never seen such a deep bond between parent and child before. Guess that's what "parent" and "child" just is [#19]. There was some kind of brilliance, not just from the light, that made it feel like that was out of my reach. I thought it'd be impossible for me to [have that].

From the light, Naina was shouting something, "Father! I know you're there, Father! [#19.5]"

When I made for the bright light, [she] threw me a small bag.

"Give that to Duo, please..... it's a Christmas present."

When I looked at it, I saw that it was a brown ring for tying off hair. The clear bag was closed with a rabbit-shaped sticker and it was rather girly.

"I apologize that it's such a boring [gift]. I think a braid suits him very well," Naina seemed to be politely bowing. There was a shining that made me think the sun might have been right there. Using my hand as a visor, I lifted my face, but I couldn't see anything (directly). I totally couldn't confirm the shape of the suit.

"Hey, you're just gonna leave? You should hand it to him yourself, yo."

"No, he blushes too easily..... and I would be a bother to everyone if I stayed any longer."

"I'm taking Naina to Noin..... thank you, Father Maxwell." The pair of them disappeared into the light. They must have closed the cockpit hatch.

"Please express my gratitude to Sister Hilde."

The suit flew off even as it was shoot out its dazzling light. Somewhere deep in my memory, I wanted to recall with nostalgia the sound of those particular over burners firing up.

"No way, could it be a....." It wasn't that I couldn't guess what suit it was; Cyrene Wind must have been looking for someone different than who I'd thought [all along]. All at once, the area returned to its original state of total darkness.

"So Naina left," the voice behind me was Hilde's.

"Yup, she says thanks."

"That girl, such a good kid, huh.... she was surrounded by a bunch of misbehavers, I hope she didn't suffer any bad influences."

"No, I'm sure she's fine..... she said to give this to Duo." I handed the brown hair tie to Hilde.

"Wow, it's nice, isn't it? Until now, he's been using a string like you did."

"Dummy, I used a rubber band."

"She liked Duo, just like I thought she did..... Duo was also all 'Naina this, Naina that.' They were strangle taken with each other." Silent Night- silent Christmas night, our sprite went on a trip with Cyrene Wind.

"..... I'm gonna miss her." Up in the night sky, "Frozen Teardrop" slowly, actually leisurely, like a snail, crossed the sky.

"She'll be fine! [And] Duo's Captain Brat!" The quiet sound of tears felt good.

MC-0022 NEXT WINTER

Suddenly, I heard the earsplitting ring of the communicator. In the midst of the grating noise, the caller was also kicking up a fuss.

"This is Warlock! [Do you copy?]" yelled my idiot son loudly.

Kathy responded calmly, "Security measures are being taken. Call back on {S.L.}"

"What a pain, why don't you do it for--"

Kathy unceremoniously hung up on him. She made the right call. Even with all the digitization, it was just common sense to [take precautions against] possible interceptors. Worse still, in places combat communication regulations have been put into effect, where do you suppose the guys using ordinary long distance communication channels are? [ALT: Where are the guys who use normal long distance communication channels in places where combat communication regulations have been put into effect?] Since being pushed by Hilde, instilling technical skill has not been a foundation. After all, he's just Captain Brat. After a while, he got the password and once the secret line was secure, [my] mean looking son looked even meaner when [his] sullen looking [visage] appeared on the virtual monitor.

"Oi, Father Crapswell! You said Zechs Merquise was on the move?! You gotta let me go, yo! I'm the only one [who can do it]!!" The tie on his braid was still the one he'd received from Naina that night. And he was still (carefully/reverently) wearing a scrap from the collar of the santa suit on his chest. I guess it was sweet if you thought about it, but he was still a little shit with an attitude problem.

"Do what you gotta do....."

"Huh, duh!"

The picture changed and Heero appeared [on the virtual monitor].

"Oi, is it true that Wufei (sallied forth) with Nataka?"

"Yup, it's true."

"You didn't stop him because...?"

"Like I could have stopped the guy! He'd already taken off by the time I'd noticed."

"Roger, I'll go clean up the mess you've made (lit: atone for your mistake)."

The one was communication cut out, "Jerk....." As per usual, his sense in picking words that would irritate was

genius-like. "Snow White" and "Warlock" headed for the interception point. Kathy came to give me a report.

"Father, I was successful in hacking the observation satellite."

"Hm....." Like her mother, she was pretty (brilliant). Later, I'd give her a right boring lecture.

"Twenty seconds until contact between "Nataku" and {Epyon}." On the central monitor, the Epyon appeared red in the bright background, flying at low altitude and equipped with its mobile armour.

"So, are you gonna show us what you got, {Epyon Ares}?"

To Be Continued.....

0 - everyone knows there are about a bajillion different ways to make your speech more polite in Japanese, right? It doesn't come out the same in English most of the time, but she is being "polite" by Fat Max's standards. That's also why I added the "Sirt" at the very start of her lines.

#1 - "Curve the bullet" is a personal style choice I got from Myth Busters from their myth of the same name, the raw text says "lives like yours aren't worth 'bullet avoiding'". In this passage, I believe Duo's talking about Heero and Zechs' connection. BUT the "That guy..." part is odd because it Fat Max distinctly references himself and some other "guy" then goes on to the "burden Heero Yuy is shouldering" and "seeing it through."

#2 - number crunch this and you get an extra thirty EIGHT minutes. If 1 Mars hour = 61 minutes 35 seconds, then twenty four hours in one day would give 24 minutes plus 24 times 35 seconds which is 840 seconds or 14 minutes. 24 plus 14 is 38).

#3 - personal style choice here, from Smashing Pumpkins.

#3.5 - raw text is in plain old "English" and says "4WD." I guess Sumizawa is just saying that if Fat Max had been in a CAR versus a BIKE, but it sounds kind of dumb even in the raw text since Fat Max is all about bikes.

#4 - well, seems like "fracture" and "broken" are the same in Japanese. I'm going to say Fat Max has gone and broken both legs and his arm because does anyone really think he was driving at a prudent speed to have just fractured three out of four limbs and be thanking the powers that be he was actually wearing protective gear?

#5 - What Catherine calls Fat Max is "Obakasan" which *technically* would parse out into "Honorable Mr. Idiot"... and actually, I guess that's not bad. But the whole "honorable" thing is SO not a feature of politeness in English, but something like Mr. Smarty Pants IS, so that's what I went with.

#6 - based on what my dictionary says and the pithy single example it gives, the wording here is two calendar years... which to ME means 730 days, but maybe it means what it means in this context: any amount of time that spans two different years on a calendar i.e. my winter holiday starts on December 27th, 2011 and ends on January 5th, 2012.

#7 - The joke gets lost in English, but in the original Japanese, the words for "compensate" and "doctor's fee" are homophones.

#8 - more homophones humor

#9 - Yeah, Ares is the Greek god of war and a man, but I'm going to stick with boating conventions (and car conventions? ergo also bike conventions?) where the machine is referred to in the feminine. And just in case the formatting gets lost, it's the Ares Hornet BETA III.

#10 - more literally, this says "It was marriage and a special attack".

#11 - basic Japanese issue here: I've never been good at "lend" and "borrow." Based on what happens in the story, all I can really imagine is that the priest OWES Fat Max money, but based on the wording HERE and the wording later in the chapter, I do not feel 100% confident that is the case. For now, I'm translating it as it's the priest in debt to Fat Max though.

#12 - yeah, that's a word. according to wiki, the ends justify the means. Which is exactly what Fat Max says he's *not* but okay.

#13 - didn't Deathscythe get shipping into the sun?

#13.5 - Literally, this says "I had no use for Hilde" and I read it as being more a statement of fact rather than a cold-hearted jab so I took the focus of Hilde as a person and shifted it to her vicinity.

#14 - this is a kind of judo that utilizes twisting and hyper-extending the joints.

#15 - the dictionary says this word is "well," or "finally," or "oh no!" I think "finally" might fit, but the passage doesn't feel ENTIRELY like "finally" to me since Fat Max gets the warm fuzzies when Hilde's telling him how to spell his name.

#16 - Near as I can tell, Fat Max's old adage about not lying still holds true although it's not mentioned specifically in this chapter. I'm not sure how being a "fake" or "shady" enters into the equation (as that's how he justifies NOT making the old priest pay him back). What I can't tell in this passage is if Fat Max is saying "I wouldn't lie about my CARDS" or "I wouldn't lie about my opponent being a PIG." I stuck with the second one because it's the outlaw he's after more than winning the card game here.

#16.5 - literally (and often) Fat Max calls Duo a "kuso gaki" and kuso runs the gamut from "dang" all the way to "shit" depending on who says it and in what context. This is the same word a hardened criminal would use to express displeasure as it is an 8 year old little boy would use to express his. Japanese has a disappointing lack of swear words. Anyway, at this juncture, Fat Max doesn't seem put out by anything Duo's done so I feel the "kuso" in this passage is more a fond term for a known troublemaker: squirt. Other times, when Duo is being less agreeable, "little shit" works for me. The reverse may well also be true, but given Duo's personality, I can only imagine he refers to Fat Max as a "kuso jijii" (crap, shit old man) out of anger.

#17 - three different words are used for memory in this passage. Omoide is [A], kioku is [B], and memorii is [C]. Omoide, I feel, is more along the lines of nostalgic memories. It's often used when talking about the past and how fun something, like a shared trip, was. Kioku is more like factual things you recall for tests and stuff, you INTEND to remember a "kioku" thing more so than an "omoide" thing. Memorii is obviously a loan from English and usually used when talking about computer memory (or to idiot foreigners).

#17.5 - literally, it's a "goddess statue" but in my passing knowledge of Christianity, the virgin Mary seems to be the best choice among females features as statues at religious establishments.

#18 - it's MC-0018. correct me if I'm wrong, but Fat Max thinks the bad guys are either from the Mars Federation OR Neuenhiem. I suppose higher ups at Neueheim KNOW they've planted a fake in the Mars Federation. I also suppose it's possible to explain the 6 years between this sighting of the REAL Miliardo as a dashing young man and the murder of the FAKE Miliardo as a wrinkly old man is supposed to be explained by the Mars aging disease. How convenient.

#18.5 - Just FYI, Naina uses the word for father than means "male parental unit."

#19 - quotes around parent and child are mine.

#19.5 - This is Naina speaking intentionally to Fat Max.

[translation] Frozen Teardrop, Requiem of Chains III, part 3 (first half)



inchoate-oeuvre.livejournal.com/6933.html



MC File 3 ((final part))

Several seconds later. The white, three-headed winged dragon called {Nataku} flew out. That was an image that came from one of the Mars Federation's surveillance cameras at a different angle. The white wings stood out sharply (lit: too much) against the red ground. But the image immediately changed into snow (lit: sandstorm). Had the Federal army noticed [Kathy's hack job]?

"Are we being jammed?"

"No, I believe it's the result of a magnetic storm," Kathy was calm. "Even if [my hacking] was noticed, I've laid numerous traps, so [the Feds] shouldn't be aware of anything unusual."

"Oh....." I muttered with a mixed sigh, then I thought of the machine that Wufei was handling.

"Would you like some coffee?" She was ever attentive.

"Black, please..... I like it strong and bitter."

"Yes, sir."

Coffee, fighting, life--they should all be bitter. I was a desperado after all; all things bitter suited me.

The defining characteristic (lit: strong point) of the flying mobile armor [#1] mode of {Epyon Pi} was in the dragon situated dead center of the twin heads. Instead of the heat rod that connected to the shield which was originally supposed to be there, there was a beam trident stored there (lit: in that corresponding space). The machine gun and large-scale beam canon, called a "dragon hang", are what made it possible for [Epyon Pi] to do battle in the air like the old Aries and Taurus. Although it was possible for mobile suits to do air battle in the AC era, it was actually a rare occurrence. One reason given was that air-to-air missiles had extremely high hit-accuracy. Since the enemy also had the same missiles, the best you could do was simultaneously shoot each other down. What's more, the fine tuning of the burners [required the pilot] to maintain the flight mode after converting back to flight mode after the (reactionary control) of the missile launch, that was a lot for the pilot to shoulder; there was nothing more bothersome. Back in the day, there was no way I'd fight in the air in a place with gravity. Seems like a lot of others thought [it was a pain, too]. [During the AC wars], There were offensive aerial fights--high altitude bombings and such--but instances of defensive aerial attacks meant to intercept or prevent that kind of attack were extremely rare. We didn't [wage] unreasonable air battles, it was better to find an advantageous place to land (ahead of time) and then face your opponent. That way was sure to have military advantages and, moreover, had higher odds of survival. There are a few exceptions to the rule, but even when a soldier is faced (lit: back to back) with death on the battlefield, he is thinking *I want to live* as he fights. As for those aerial battles between (similar mobile armors), there's the fact that their numbers were so rare, but also the pilots' basic survival instincts are consciously at work; not once have I tried [aerial battle]. Even when Heero was being indifferent [towards the concept of] living, I recall that he did not experience any aerial "dog fights" in {Wing Gundam.} {XXXG-01W}, which had the unique property of converting to flight mode, aka bird mode, seceded from bombing or when attacked from the sky, changed back into regular mode after securing a landing point and touching down; that was a standard move. Of course, all that

applied [only] to Earth. On Mars, which was ravaged by magnetic storms, enemy searching radars lost their meaning and air-to-air missiles hit-accuracy was virtually useless. Among the Mars suit variations, there are several forms of light-weight aerial battle forms that take advantage of Mars' low gravity, but the heavily armored styles that also had (lit: prepared) various flight functions were not being manufactured. But Wufei--His {Epyon Pi}--Nataku, as far as I could see from the data that just flashed on the screen, he both maintained high (flight) altitude and appeared to be waiting for the enemy to appear. It was already a few seconds past the ETA but he'd yet to make contact [with the enemy]. That had to be because the white three-headed winged dragon had its sights locked on another mobile armor--the previously unknown quantity that was {Epyon Ares}; they meant to dogfight.

The crimson, double-headed flying dragon that Special Officer First Class Zechs Merquise rode was seen flying low and fast on the main monitor just before the snow [had taken over the screen]. The {Epyon Prime [#2]} had been made from plans that had placed priority on hand-to-hand combat. That's because its basic concept was chiefly for the purpose of chivalrous dueling. What else would you expect from the suit that "unprecedented eccentric" Treize Khushrenada had built. If you reason with common sense, you'd think there was no need to have added flight capabilities to this suit, but the heat rod, coupled as it was to the shield, was most effective and had the most power when [the suit] was in its mobile armor form. The cutting power of the red-hot heat rod increased in destructiveness in direct correlation to the speed of flight. Heero, the suit's first pilot, had proven that. I'd only (confirmed) it on video logs from the past, but I'm sure it had been at the fight at Luxembourg on Earth. The instant you thought Epyon had slipped between the dozens of mobile suits on Earth was when all those suits were ripped to shreds then blew up and were defeated. At any rate, the swing of that heat-rod begat destructive results. I could surmise that that was the calculated result of the most tactically suitable attack methods [devised] by the ZERO system more than [it had been] Heero's choose battle style, probably. It's none of my business but, back then the correct name was "Epyon system" but since it's just about the same, it's just as well to call it ZERO. The problem, however, was that the basic design plan even for "duel" [situations] had the system providing for "massive slaughter." Even when [ZERO's] goal was to "duel"--a fight where the loss of life was at an absolute minimum--in cases where the enemy appeared in a large corps, it was permissible to allow "maximum extermination" for the sake of driving back [the extraneous numbers]. Yeah, I thought that was contradictory, too. But there you have it. That, too, was pretty level-headed, a conscious (contradiction). It echoes the [sentiment] of the phrase '*war for the sake of peace*'. The "intended goal" and the "machine with the means" were at once paradoxically intermingled. Although it's supposedly self-evident, how is it Treize outfitted a mobile suit designed for dueling with both the "ZERO system" and variable forms of flight capabilities? I didn't get the deeper meaning. I didn't get it but I later found out that Treize had said this Epyon was a "guide post." He probably meant that you should choose your own path. The "duel," the "maximum extermination," selecting those remained something only for the pilot. That was all well and good, but there's no doubting it was a massive mental burden for the one who made the choice. After all, its first pilot, Heero, had a mental overload. He lost track of the enemy and it became unclear which opponent to take down, he [zeroed in on] taking action [against] all weapons and to exterminate any and all people who possessed them. There's no mistaking that Heero was being consumed/undermined by insanity/craziness at the time. The next to pilot {Epyon} was Miliardo Peacecraft a.k.a. Zechs. It's not clear whether or not that man was crazy. But Miliardo, who became the leader of White Fang, but his attempt to slaughter the people of Earth [in order to] "purge" is historical fact.

Kathy brought me the coffee. It was a careful blend: just the right temperature with a superb balance between the bitterness and acidity in every sip.

"This is good....did you learn [how to make coffee] from your mom?" Sally Po was a woman who could do anything from medical treatments to shootouts to commanding battleships and do it with dexterity.

"No, my mother isn't terribly skilled at this sort of thing." That was unexpected but strangely fitting.

"Does that mean Wufei always drinks his coffee like this?"

"Master Chang will only drink that which he himself has made."

As I stared at the dark brown liquid in my mug, I muttered, "Sounds just like him." That guy still didn't trust anyone.

Wufei had probably not started up the "ZERO system" that had been loaded into Natak. He trusted his own instincts more than the battle analysis the machine did automatically. That's the kind of man he is. If I were to add one more thing to that picture of Wufei, it would be that he, by himself, acquired the blueprint [for Epyon] that Treize had designed and steadily built {Epyon}, redoing the preparations and equipment [until] he made it his own. In this test-drive stage, this sortie had come up and before he was familiar with the handling, he was thrust into real battle well, that spoke very much of "Warrior Chang Wufei." But more than that, I didn't get why Wufei had painted that three-headed winged dragon mainly "white" and "blue." I wondered if he was still dragging [the memory of] Treize [around] but considering that he code-named it "Natak," I imagined he had some different (feelings).

Looking at it from a different angle, suspicious about why Treize hadn't painted {Epyon Prime} white cropped up in my mind. I interpreted those "red" and "black" colors as the colors of the defeated. It was also the defeated who changed the era and begin the next [era in] history. It had a splendid reassurance more than elegance. According to Treize, "white" and "blue" imparted the (meaning) of an elegant hero and I thought the polar opposite, color-wise, was shown [in Epyon] [#2.5].

Then, the snow disappeared from the main monitor and the video feed returned to normal.

"It appears as though the magnetic storm has ended."

".....huh, yeah." And it seemed that Zechs sensed the enemy overhead. The battle has not yet begun. Wufei's Natak circled (above) Zechs' Epyon, keeping the latter at the apex of a sort of cone. That method of pursuit which applied a basic technique called a "pylon flight [#2.75]", made it possible to both do a "hit and way" or "dogfight." If Zechs tried to get away going full throttle, it would probably work, but he was probably aware that the distance between him and the {Virgo IVs} accompanying him would only get bigger. And "ZERO" would have decreed that "in long-drawn out war, increased allies are beneficial." As far as the data displayed on the submonitor screen, for cruising range and (straight) speed, Natak was the better of the two. However, the Epyon's mobility and agility were better. That meant that in hand-to-hand and close quarters combat, [Epyon] would always have the advantage. But Wufei would go ahead with aerial close quarters fighting--I watched him begin a dogfight. Ever since the old days, his fighting style was to challenge his opponent's strong points, pin them with a power play, and somehow come out on top. If he were used to handling the machine, it should be plenty warmed up by now. While it was [just now] time to start, the suit had been ripe [for a fight] long ago.

"What's he waiting for?"

And then it happened.

The double-headed flying dragon moved forward. Suddenly, the nose came up and it climbed virtually straight up. Zechs [had] made the first move. For this battlefield in the sky, ZERO had determined this choice was the most suitable. The two-headed dragon bared its fangs. [Those "fangs" were] double barreled beam canons and they spit fire. They were fired at Natak's predicted path of progression.

"He can't..... avoid that." I determined that from Wufei's (character), he continued to [prepare] to take the hit. If he was booted up "ZERO," Natak would have predicted that attack and slammed on the brakes to avoid [taking damage]. But the dual beams of light couldn't keep pace with Natak. Easily evading the twin beams by weaving through them, Natak gained speed.

"No way....." I was amazed. The precisely measured "ZERO" wasn't supposed to make mistakes in distances measured with the eye. It was most fitting that by Natak's circular flight pattern, plenty of suit efficiency speed and air pressure and wind direction and other collateral data had been completely calculated.

"There isn't something wrong with the suit's data, is there?" I was suspicious of the data on the submonitor.

"There is nothing wrong with the data." Kathy told me flatly. Seemed like the girl had the right amount of pride in her work. "The data on the suit that was left here and the data that has been analyzed on the monitor are now in complete agreement."

"You said that this is the first he's been in the suit, right?"

"Yes."

"....." I folded my arms and fell deep into thought. If the data was correct, that meant Wufei was demonstrating the result of a little something extra that far and away surpassed me an "ZERO's" predictions. I don't think it's just [his] technique piloting Nataka. Then, Nataka tilted the right wing, made a seeming detour by circling to the left at high speed and returned fire. It gave the impression of things going up a notch (lit: being taken up one gear).

"Is he just going to fly right in there?!" That would just make him prey for the two-headed dragon. But the three-headed winged dragon let its beam canon rip from its dragon hang. The twin beams shot off in return didn't do so much as graze him. In the next instant, the crimson wings and white wings clashed. Zechs' Epyon took a direct hit from the beam canon [in] Nataka's dragon hang.

Epyon gave a huge swing of its heat rod as they brushed past each other, but Nataka evaded it by a hairsbreadth. There wasn't the least bit of damage to the suit, (but) it had to hurt to have "ZERO's" predictions completely overturned. There was no mistaking that the alert agility of the Epyon Zechs piloted was better/higher than expected. Nevertheless, with Wufei's skillful handling, Nataka's acceleration and deceleration far surpassed that of the Epyon. I thought "ZERO" was correcting numerical values and in a big fluster with the calculations right about now. Mere seconds.....but there was no way Wufei could let that time to go waste. In rapid succession, the quickly rising Nataka turned a loop-the-loop and suddenly dropped to begin pounding away with the machine gun equipped in the dragon hang. Wufei's aim was just about too perfect. Black smoke rose from Epyon's left wing-mounted (thrust burner). Ever since the old days, Wufei's standard fighting [style] was to rain continuous attacks [down upon the target]. The three-headed winged dragon, following right behind the two-headed flying dragon, fired three or four shots from its beam canon. As expected, the Epyon just managed to avoid that attack but there was no changing its slow downward descent.

"I never imagined Master Chang could do so much."

"Y-yea.....I'm kind of surprised myself." (Even though) his opponent was the "ZERO system" equipped Epyon, how had he managed to surpass it in the early stages [of battle]? "Huh?" I noticed a difference in the main wings of the two suits. [Those of] the red flying dragon Epyon were covered on one side with the dust peculiar to Mars. On the other hand, Wufei's Nataka's wings hadn't lost their platinum luster (lit: shine/sparkle). That was proof that they had been well-polished. Suppose two pilots, identically matched in skill and machinery, fought; it would be the one who made better preparations that would grab the victory. Wufei had probably wiped [Nataka] down to within an inch of his life just to eek out an extra couple of kilometers an hour of speed. In addition, he'd maintained high altitude flight where it was difficult for dust to collect [on the wings]. Of course, Zechs' suit must have been at least washed, waxed, and given an anti-dust coating at an "auto-maintenance plant [#3]." But it was Wufei's dedicated maintenance that prevailed above and beyond [that of Epyon's]. Ergo, without [the hampering effect of the] Mars dust, he'd pulled (numerical valued [note: probably just meaning "performance"]) [out of Nataka] that exceeded the suit's predicted performance. In aerial battle, even the slightest acceleration (efficiency) could greatly influence the tide of battle. That might be because for however much "ZERO" calculated all the surrounding [factors] in the environment, it couldn't numerically evaluate Wufei's feelings towards his suit (lit: feelings of love for the suit). I was a Gundam pilot just like him and I wanted to bow my head. But then, I'd also retired and anyway, the things Wufei did and accomplished had always surprised me--even back in the day.

"He's an unyielding man of action, isn't he."

The white three-headed winged dragon Natakū continued its vicious attack. Meanwhile, the red two-headed flying dragon Epyon continued utilizing its own particular agility as a means to escape [the attack]. The burner tank belching black smoke was cut off, and in order to maintain balance, [Zechs] purged the unscathed burner on the right wing. It was a good decision. Typically, it was hard to throw away undamaged [stuff]. An average pilot would definitely have had scruples. That honor/nobility was successful. The lightened Epyon put on a sudden burst of speed. Also, its wings beat quickly up and down. With that kind of acrobatic flight, Wufei couldn't get his aim to lock on from behind. The pursuing Natakū also increased the power and accelerated. He went a shade faster than full throttle and seemed to put in in (top gear).

"He's going to put on more speed?!" Said Kathy with admiration.

"Yes! This is where he attacks, eh!" Natakū kept accelerating and was surely going to capture Epyon's tail burner. And the heat rod grazed close by. "That's it!" It was no time to be worried about the limits. "Do it now!" I shouted, forgetting myself. "If you're going to put him down, do it before he causes you trouble! Hit that defensive bastard somehow! [alt: Hit him with something BIG!]"

Then it happened.

Epyon suddenly decelerated, turned a massive loop-the-loop and ended up tailing Natakū. This was, beyond all doubt, a bone fide dogfight. He must have pulled an unimaginable number of Gs, and he only pulled it off with difficulty.

"Shit!" I tsked. That it couldn't be finished that easily spoke for itself [alt: It was self-evident that it couldn't have been so easily finished]. "ZERO" rewrote the data time and again to devise battle tactics that matched its opponent. Even if I thought about it normally, it was obvious a long, drawn out fight was disadvantageous. It was too bad that [Wufei] couldn't have popped off a game-winning hit in the close quarters fight just then. But Wufei's Natakū didn't withdraw. The burners began firing in earnest. The distance between him and Epyon grew as he pulled away with an astonishing blast of speed. Fast enough that I thought he disappeared for a second.

"What the....."

"Seriously....." There was nothing to do but be amazed. He reached an area above even top gear. Just how much speed could that machine put out, anyway? The heartfelt preparations and all, they weren't that good. It was speed enough to make everything prior seem like merely a warm-up.

"So this means "ZERO" now has to rearrange its tactics."

"It's overwhelming, isn't it."

"No comment [lit: I can't say anything about that yet]." Once again, Natakū came flying in, dead center in front of Epyon and fired away with the machine gun and beam canon in the dragon hang. Epyon, taking hits without any (formative technique), was plainly cornered by its [own] inferiority. Wufei's attack was overwhelming. Unexpectedly, Richard Wagner came blaring out through the base's speakers.

"What is this?"

"It's Flight of the Valkyries."

"I wasn't asking for the name of the piece..... I was asking why the hell we're listening to it."

"This is also a part in "Operation Mythos." I believe it's better to increase the tension [#4] if we're going to observe the battle." I couldn't really understand [her] sentiment. "We must have Master Chang fight hard." Even so, I believed there was no meaning in getting us all worked up.

"Is there any chance Wufei can hear this, too?"

"As if." Kathy composed herself and finished her coffee. "But I think our thoughts are perceived." If [we fought a] winning battle, then Wagner's piece would elevate [our] fighting spirit; if [we fought a] losing battle, this magnificent melody would become an extremely pained one. She must have seen something in my face because she quietly said, "It's alright, Master Chang's Natakku will win." That reminded me even more of her mother Sally showing up with some fantastically inspired thing. "What's more, believing in him is the only thing we can do for him right now." Kathy's eyes brimmed with confidence. It really may have been just that. Even if that was optimistic, "hope springs eternal" was something in which life abounded.

Wufei's Natakku stuck right on Epyon's tail, maintaining a beneficial attack position. Shots from his beam canon came out at tempo. It was actually a desirable development. It seemed as though Epyon were unable to bear the violent attack, lost speed and descended. I thought [Zechs] might finally have been shot down. In order to keep up the pursuit, Natakku began to quickly descend. It was, however, a feint. Zechs' Epyon rose, turning continuously in sideways figure eight's called "Cuban eights [#4.5]." Wufei's Natakku got too close. However fast he could go, {ZERO} could read his orbit/track [trajectory?]. Epyon's heat rod turned a large arc and made a deep cut in Natakku's shield (part). If it had been a high speed fighter suit, that was one thing, but it was baffling to see [Zechs] do a "Cuban eight" in the heavily equipped mobile armor. The shield damage was equivalent to ripping the wings off the three-headed dragon which had, thus far, controlled the high-speed battle. Aerial navigation (became a distorted load). Just when I thought it was impossible to continue the aerial fight any longer, Natakku dropped into a tailspin. Epyon mimicked the move. Somehow, I overlooked a split-second happening. The next time he closed in [on Epyon], Wufei shot the beam trident out with indomitable fighting spirit and stabbed it unerringly into Epyon's chest. Cut the meat and sever the bone, that was just like Wufei's fighting style). With regards to the aerial battle, I could say Natakku was overwhelmingly victorious. Before they hit the ground, both suits changed modes, assumed their mobile suit stature and stood on the ground.

I couldn't think of the two odd machines standing there as being {Gundams} of the same denomination of [Epyon]. One with a sense of being heavily armored and one with a feeling of slender flexibility yet the armaments of either one (held) contrast to their [respective] images. Even with the rugged looking dragon hang equipped, Epyon Pi was smart with its basic coloring of white and blue--Wufei's Natakku. And--with a large sword giving off green beams of light that reminded you of the beautiful, fantastic aurora borealis in its right arm, and in the silver colored left arm, the long heat rod burning like a red hot fixed star and a pretty, rose red shield equipped was the ominous black machine--Zechs' Epyon. The left arm was silver because, in the "Eve Wars," after Wing Gundam 0 lobbed it off, it must have been replaced with new parts. In that space to the upper left between shoulder and chest, Wufei's beam trident was still stuck where it had originally hit. It was still crackling.....with sparks. Zechs' Epyon thrust the giant beam sword into the ground and with his [newly] freed right hand, pulled the trident out of his chest and threw it back to Wufei's Natakku. It was actually an arrogant/haughty move. Before commencing a duel, it looked like he was evening the playing field but it was like the fair and square behavior also entirely negates the whole feeling out and advancing and falling back that was the dogfight 306/3/1-2. For Zechs' Epyon, he held the robust impression of not caring about the degree of damage [he'd sustained].

"Why did Zechs' Merquise do a thing like that?" Kathy asked. The (elevating) song had finished.

"Cause he's Zechs." The coffee had gotten pretty cold.

"But you said that Special Officer First Class Zechs is not Zechs, right."

I set my mug on a side table without finishing the dregs. "That's right..... it's not Zechs himself but [his] way of thinking and style of action are both that of the old Zechs Merquise."

Meanwhile, Wufei's Natakku caught the beam trident as if it were the most natural thing in the world [and proceeded to] spin it over head before planting it exactly in front of himself; then, with an abundance of indifference/alooofness

and fighting spirit, he leveled the tip at Epyon's head. I could almost hear Wufei's spirited battle cry coming from the pilot's chair. Across from him was Epyon whose quiet, cool headedness made it seem like he was slowly and carefully observing the opponent he was about to confront. The aerial fight was over but we didn't know where the match was going yet [alt: the battle wasn't over yet]. I got the impression that there was no end in sight for the glaring contest those two were having. Both of them were considering the distance between them and when to jump into it. The first to move was--Zechs' Epyon. For the distance between the two suits facing each other, the superheated heat rod would work to his advantage. Just when I thought the seemingly restrained swing was undulating like a snake, it straightened all of a sudden and the sharp point stuck out. Wufei's Natakku took one leap back. And the beam trident struck down the [rapidly] approaching heat rod. But the heat rod bent again like a whip and after dodging the first cut from the beam trident, it wrapped around [the trident's] handle and blocked the coming move. If it was me and my partner in that situation, I'd get right up in the other guy's face, scythe wrapped up and all. If I made it into an (infight) he wouldn't be able to use that long whip. Then, I'd settle it by cutting down my opponent with my scythe. Wufei, however, didn't do that. Contrariwise, he moved back another half step and moved his trident bearing left arm away. Epyon's heat rod was perfectly extended in a straight line. Next, Natakku prepared the dragon hang on its right arm. To the enemy at the other end of that line, he fired the massive beam canon. Wufei's choice was better (lit: correct) than my own risky fighting style. I thought it'd definitely be a direct hit. Yet Zechs' Epyon dodged it. As if "ZERO" had predicted the attack, he jumped into the air and swung the giant beam sword down. Back in the day, that move had brought down the space fortress Bulge. I respected the enormous destructive power [it had]. Wufei was valiantly dauntless in that he did not hesitate in the face of certain danger but daringly carried on with the attack. He immediately fired up the shoulder burners and went attacking, thrusting his beam trident up above him. There was a spray of light. The points of Natakku's beam trident and Epyon's beam sword crashed. If this collision had occurred in zero gravity, Wufei's Natakku would surely have been declared the victor. If you considered the loss of Epyon's burner tanks, Natakku had the most power. And yet, the energy of the slumping Epyon was tremendous. He fired the remaining burner and making further use of Mars' low gravity, forcibly shoved [against?] the beam trident in a power play. Wufei's Natakku was thrown against the ground and fell flat on its back. The timing of his (jumping in) was perhaps tenths of a second too fast. The greatest output point for pushing himself back up had shifted. With the one point, Wufei's boldness worked against him. Zechs' Epyon attacked like an encompassing cover-all; he swung the giant sword at Natakku. That was repelled by the damaged shield and the beam trident returned [a hit of its own] and [Wufei] followed through with the dragon hang's close range canon. As if "ZERO" had predicted even that retaliation, [Zechs] skillfully avoided the trident and canon in a series of combination attacks while at the same time schooling [the fight] towards Epyon's specialty: hand-to-hand combat. In the close fighting so far, that Wufei's Natakku had yet to dodge a mortal blow is worthy of admiration. But for the armor was barely holding out as it was; the scratches were adding up. The shield was already just a beat up shadow of its former [glory]. If [Wufei?] didn't temporarily fall back and break up the (sloping) blow, that would only spur Epyon's mercilessly violent attack to speed up. It was only a matter of time until the mortal would be dealt.

"But what should..... how could he escape that situation?" I muttered what I'd been thinking. In response to that, Kathy had an unexpected reply.

"Master Chang.....use "ZERO."

"Huh?"

"Start up the "ZERO system." She'd said it like a strong prayer. Unfortunately, I didn't think [Wufei would do it]. That was surely the only way out. Even so, no matter what the situation, that guy was a man who fought his battles under his own power only.

"You're supposed to have faith." There was conviction in Kathy's eyes. "Why else did [you] name that suit {Natakku}?" She persisted with strength. My impression of her changed. I wonder if experiencing the collection of AC era files made the little bumpkin girl being speaking with confidence inherited from her mother after all. Without any time passing, the round "battle analysis sphere" in the center of Wufei's Natakku's chest went from a green light to a red

one; it didn't escape my notice.

"Oh, he....." I didn't know what changed his state of mind. But it was certain that "ZERO" which was Natau's true ability, had been booted up. At first, there were misgivings as to whether or not there was time [for Natau's ZERO to make much of a difference]. But it was a pointless worry. His evasion was quick. The dragon hang's shooting precision was even more better. And the target point was concentrated on Epyon's right chest/shoulder area that had been damaged in the aerial fight. To a warrior, it might have been cowardice, but to a fighter battling for his life, you could say it was a natural response. It was a counter attack unhampered by self-respect. No, actually it's better to say it was an effective attack. The counter attack and defense were done at almost the same time and thanks to that, the gears of his opponent's defense got out of whack. All at once, the tides of battle changed. Under a shower of concentrated canon fire, Zechs' Epyon bent back. Natau struck Epyon upside the head with the dragon hang. It was a punch after my own heart. Epyon was getting in a bad way. This was [Wufei's] chance, Natau seceded and regrouped from a pretty removed/remote position. I thought Natau's (reaction velocity) went far above and beyond the level of a mobile suit style weapon. This was a confrontation between two "ZERO" users, something previously unseen directly by [either?] of us--here too they would display "Epyon Ares."

"Well done, Master," Kathy said with relief. But the timing of her (display [of relief]) was good.

"Hey, his comlink's not open, right?"

"Of course not."

Was it coincidence or maybe [her] thoughts really did reach [Wufei]. Either way, it was certain Wufei's "something" had changed. Ever since he was a kid, he'd been as obstinate as an old man, but just this one time he seemed to be a man of "tolerance" or "trust."

Silence returned to the battlefield. Both suits were roughly equal in condition. They both had sustained damage but as long as they had the wherewithal to stab each other, it was possible to find out who would be the victor. I was afraid that was the answer the two "ZEROS" would predict. At one time, the reconstructed Cinq kingdom had been surprise attacked and in the final stages of the offensive and defensive battle, Wing 0 ((pilot: Zechs)) and Epyon ((pilot: Heero)) who were actually allies and both had (loaded) the "ZERO system" apparently had a confrontation. Back then, the two "ZEROS" continued to read one another's moves and wound up in something close to sen-nichi-te [#5] and I heard that ultimately it brought the system down. This current situation, however, was different from that case. Zechs' Epyon and Wufei's Natau were clearly facing each other as enemies. The key to separating the winner from the loser resided in the pilots themselves. Their skill was at the same level but--was it Zechs who faithfully [followed] directions from "ZERO" or was it Wufei with his new found faith in "ZERO"? If you compared the differences, that was the only part [that didn't match up] that I could think of. However before the confrontation could reach its conclusion, we happened upon a situation we'd forgotten about.

"Father.....I'm afraid there's something....." I thought it was a different Kathy than the one from just before. Her face was pale. On another monitors enemy detection radar, three blips appeared.

The late arrival of the three mobile doll {Virgo IVs} popped up on the surveillance satellite's monitor, too. There were high mobility-use booster options 309/2/8< on the three suits' backs and they purged their shoulder-mounted burner packs upon landing as if the dolls could comprehend that they'd entered a battlefield. Here after, those three suits would move according to Zechs' volition. In other words, it was the same as having a completed combat force to which "ZERO"'s intent was [shared] in high degree. It was a disadvantageous situation tactically, militarily, and oppressively. If Natau's "ZERO"'s decision was only focused on taking Epyon down [and not out], we were surely beat. That said, there was no other way out. Choices for the future were slim to none 309/3/8-9.

As I recall, the Virgo IIIs were extensively mass produced at the "OZ" MD auto-plant "Vulcan [#5.5]" in Mars' orbit. Following the Mariamaia incident, all the mobile dolls and plants [that made them] were supposed to have been

destroyed, but it would be unfathomable if that dog (lit: unscrupulous) Neuenheim Konzern guy had been collecting them on the sly. I could easily imagine how effective it must have been, [using the dolls] to make Mars suits out of MTF on a massive scale. And he turned the Virgo from a model II to a model IV. Even so, looking at the IVs [revealed that] they weren't so different from the IIs with their white hang. There wasn't even a special change in their color scheme; they were the same [colors] as when I'd fought them. What we discovered from the data analysis screen was that they were equipped with planet defender, which is regarded as the strongest defense [ive equipment], four on each shoulder or eight to a suit. But the Virgo IVs planet defenders were doing the latest tactics and a beefed up electromagnetic shield system; it was the big ole "Neo Planet Defender." 310/1/1-4. Additionally, the long barreled beam rifles closely resembled the one from the old {Vaieito [#5.75]} had and its destructive [power] was far weaker than the beam canon on Nataka's dragon hang, I thought it was on par with Wing 0's twin buster rifle.

The three Virgo IVs fired their high energy beam rifles at once. Wufei's Nataka used the burners to jump back [to safety]. If it had been any old jump, Wufei would probably have been hit [regardless]. As Nataka avoided [the beam fire], he shot the dragon hang's beam canon from the very edge of its range. In response, all twenty-four Neo Planet Defenders made the three suits float up and put out a complicated electromagnetic defense shield three layers strong. The beam canon couldn't break through the outermost layer of shielding. The bleak odds were as clear as day. We were made to feel the oppressive difference in destructive power and defensive capabilities. You didn't need to compare pure fighting strength [to know that]. It would be extremely difficult for Wufei to fight them alone. There was an off chance that Epyon's "ZERO" could have strategically foreseen the Virgo IVs arriving when they had. If that was the case, they would definitely be the better team both in fighting power and battle tactics. If ever there was a time for Wufei to come out with his hands up, this was it. For the sake of avoiding the Virgo IVs' beam canon rifles, Wufei's Nataka, the white three-headed winged dragon, went into mobile armor mode and took to the sky. Now, his sole advantage laid in that mobility. I wanted him to fly on out of there while the going was good. Wufei, however, probably wasn't planning on giving up. It looked like he was going to continue taking evasive measures until Nataka's "ZERO" came up with some way out of that mess. That was both an action that reflected Wufei's indomitable warrior spirit and likewise "ZERO", which would indicate the flight's continuation, garnered trust/faith from Nataka. 310/2/12-13<. Even if the forthcoming conclusion was chock full of grief.

It wasn't just me, even Kathy was discouraged and more than half given up when--An encrypted signal came in.

"This is Trowa Phobos.....requesting a response from secret F to T."

Kathy's hand quickly performed [the keystrokes] to answer on the [specified] secret line.

"This is the North Pole Base, I've confirmed the line." Phobos appeared on the monitor.

"A message from Snow White.....show Nataka's evasion direction [alt: tell Nataka this evasion direction]. Face northeast 02PX-78DY point."

I turned towards the communicator and complained, "You tell him! [Heero] outta tell Wufei himself!"

"He is currently engaging in battle with the "ZERO system" so communication isn't possible. And I tried contacting {Nataka} myself but I couldn't [get through]."

"You said engaging in battle using "ZERO?" I could taste the "hope" that bubbled up from the pit of my stomach. On the main monitor, the white three-headed winged dragon made an about face to the Northeast. "In that case....." I couldn't help but grin. As if I could help myself from smiling at a time like this. "Sorry, could you tell Heero this: {Nataka} is also operating under the "ZERO system;" we can't communicate. Tell him that."

"I told you I can't tell him. This is the second time I've said that."

"So tell my idiot son! Wufei's already going to the designated point."

"Kathy Po, unfortunately I'm not a communications officer. My job was done as soon as Snow White's message was delivered. I don't envy you having to keep company with the elderly--I'm not the type for it."

"Roger.....I will contact Warlock from here." I [or maybe it's Kathy?] put on a happy face to speak to the monitor. Kathy seemed to be getting a bit lax.

"But Phobos, isn't it better to be a wee bit nice?"

"....."

"The aged and women scar more easily than you."

"End of communication [#6]."

Trowa Phobos' one-way communication cut out.

"Did I say something that rubbed him the wrong way?" Kathy muttered; she was at loose ends. She probably didn't know because the "Zechs file" had been censored, but the keywords "women" and "scar" were taboo. I was delighted. Between the two of us 311/1/13<, I'd let being called "elderly" slide this time. More importantly, this meant a complete change in the tides of war. Heero's Snow White using "ZERO" to do military operations was just as good as saying there was a way to break through this craptastic situation. And if Natus, which was [also] doing "ZERO" military operations was made to synch with Snow White's battle plan, he most definitely would have seized upon that chance for victory.

"I've contacted Warlock."

"Kathy, would you bring up the (evasion point) on the monitor?"

"Roger."

Immediately, a complicated topographical map appeared on screen. If you really loomed at the point that was blinking [on the map], [you'd notice] it was a deep gorge. The rock walls were over five hundred meters tall and towered on both sides; the further back you went, the narrower it became.

"Hey-o, this is it." It terminated in a dead end. "There won't be anywhere to run.....right?"

"Yes, but Master Change is already heading there." The glorious hope that had come bubbling up had become a questionable situation in an instant. If [Wufei could] get the upper hand out of that gorge--. I fully activated [that part of my brain that] I never really used that dealt with (the field of) circular thinking 311/2/16. If I were Quatre, I'd be able to break it down and explain it easily. It was plausible that [they] would lay an ambush there, blockade the three Virgo IVs and Epyon after luring them there and then Snow White, Warlock, and Natus would seize and annihilate or attack from both sides; that was the only thing that I could come up with. But if that was the plan, wouldn't Epyon's "ZERO system" just think of some counter measure to get away? Or even if Snow White and the others attacked all at once from three sides, it would be a powerless [move] in the face of those overwhelmingly defensive Neo Planet Defenders. Even if, by some clever plan, they managed to steal all of the Virgo IVs' beam rifles, that destructive power wouldn't break through the triple electromagnetic defense field.

"Is there any other way?" A guy like me couldn't begin to guess at "ZERO's" calculations. The best we could do now was probably just watch over and believe in the fight of the three guys now appearing on the main monitor.

"There's a response from Duo."

"What's he say?"

"Enjoy my smooth moves,' apparently."

#1 - Near as I can tell, this is just a souped up (I guess) flight mode for a mobile suit.

#2 - This is what I am going to call the suit which was the very first Epyon that had ever been made... as opposed to whatever later versions people improved upon and built (like Wufei's Pi and Zechs' Ares)

#2.5 - Well, keep the color musings in mind for the next chapter when we find out what Zechs is piloting the Epyon. Also: Treize was going on about how wonderful it is to be the loser, so doesn't it fit that he painted the Epyon red and black?

#2.75 - I'm calling Sumizawa on questionable flight terms here. My mother is a certified (glider) flight instructor and back in The Day, she used to truck me and my siblings around as she played ground crew for my father, who was racing gliders. I consider them "in the know" about flight terms. A pylon is actually a stationary MARKER around which to fly. At least as far as American flight lingo is concerned. The fact that Wufei is CIRCLING around Epyon, not just turning around it AND the fact that Epyon is a moving target makes me think this is NOT a "pylon move" but... a circling move, more on par with how birds of prey would stalk live prey.

#3 - This seems unlike Zechs because he was trained by Treize and didn't Treize drill the importance of the pilot taking the best care of his own machine, never letting someone else or something else do it for him/her?

#4 - "tension" as transliterated from English into Japanese (as was done here) is a positive thing, it's like "high energy" or something equally buoyant and fun and exciting. I just can't think of a single word that fits well in the sentence above.

#4.5 - A Cuban 8 is done on a vertical plane and the 8 is tipped sideways like the infinity sign. At the bottom of the loops, the plane is right side up, the plane goes around the curve and does the top of the loop upside down, and at the intersection or twist of the 8, the plane rolls so the pilot can enter to bottom of the next loop right-side up.

#5 - sen-ichi-te is apparently an expression that means that one "repeats moves endlessly." Since the dictionary didn't have a good synonym and I think it sounds less good to use "endlessly repeat moves" I decided to stick with "sen-nichi-te"

#5.5 - Vulcan or Vulcanus. I'm not sure why they chose this name, but in the text, it's supposedly just a manufacturing plant that's in Mars orbit (scientifically, it's the theoretical planet between Mercury and the Sun). but it could be another reference to more Greek gods (and they make a LOT of the fact that Mars is the Roman War God (which now seems kind of funny, since they go off about GREEK gods elsewhere) OR a Star Trek reference (which would just make sense). All English references, however, are to Vulcan whereas the Japanese sticks to a transliteration of the Latin Vulcanus.

#5.75 - I cannot track down what suit this is >.<

#6 - that line sure as hell SEEMS like it should be Phobos speaking, since he's the one getting burned. BUT it wasn't set off with the special quotes used for the rest of Phobos' lines so I dunno *shrug*

...[continued in next post]...

[translation] Frozen Teardrop, Requiem of Chains III, part 3



inchoate-oeuvre.livejournal.com/7361.html

...[continued from previous post]....

"What is that supposed to mean?" Offbeat, as usual. That was just like the nerves-of-steel Mr. Flatter Me McFlatterson 311/3/15 [#7]. Pot, meet kettle.



The white three-headed winged dragon continued flying even as it took several hits from the Virgo IVs. [He] had lost quite a bit of speed. I thought he might be decelerating on purpose to bait them to the appointed spot. Or was it because the damage was so severe, that was as fast as [Nataku] could go? Either way, it was necessary to execute the mission before Epyon's "ZERO" noticed Heero and Duo were there. But I watched and waited for my predictions to be disproved.

"That idiot..... like he has any smooth moves." Before entering the deep gorge, the beam scythe wielding, black cape wearing Warlock leisurely planted himself [at the opening of the gorge]. With moving that machine on the sly, its abilities were supposed to be displayed to their full extent. The kid really shouldn't have been named Duo.

"I can't count on you." It appeared that the Virgo IVs' target had now become Warlock. Immediately, they began a concentrated beam rifle attack. Warlock charged forward as he nimbly evaded to the left and right. As after image of the black cape left a trick track as he moved. The light footwork was passable. The enemy seeking monitors on the Virgo IVs were probably fooled into showing a few or a few dozen Warlocks. Their beam rifles' aim was imprecise and they were shooting at the wrong places. I guess it wasn't called Warlock for nothing. Warlock sped up even more as he was moving irregularly. But how close would he get--. Warlock, who was the closest, turned to the electromagnetic field and gave the beam scythe a huge swing and thrust. Just as I'd thought, the beam scythe was no match for the Neo Planet Defenders, which were prided as an impregnable defense. While going round in a big circular movement, Warlock seemed to be searching the Virgo IVs periphery, but there were not supposed to be any blind spots. Then, the white three-headed dragon made an about face and flew back over the battlefield. [Wufei] probably couldn't stand watching my idiot son's far-out moves. But in that utterly beat up condition, it was recklessly rash to offer his aid or even to go on a special/suicide [#8] attack. He quickly aimed his beam rifle up. At the same time, Warlock's beam scythe attack was unveiled. The beam canon in the three-headed winged dragon's dragon hang shot out. The cooperation between land and air made a wave-ike attack with superb (leniency and severity). It wasn't quite enough to totally fend off the Virgo IVs [ALT: it wasn't quite enough to overwhelm the Virgo IVs] but it wasn't a bad combination.

"Do you think that's a feint?" Kathy asked naively.

"Both of them together....." It gave me a really interesting thought. A wild attack and a reckless special/suicidal attack--. Behind this obvious battle, Snow White was coolly aiming for something. That suit, wearing its cape that was outfitted with a unique stealth feature, would be completely undetectable, even by the Mars Federation's observation satellites. Epyon's "ZERO" probably hadn't pulled in the net of its investigative battle analysis. Suddenly, a thought came to me. In the back of my mind, I recalled the battle data from a few hours ago when Snow White and Warlock went up against Katrine's Maganacs. I was sure Heero fought with only his beam sabre. When the suit was loaded onto the long-distance high speed hovercraft Voyage, it was supposed to have its new buster rifle. But it wasn't used [to fight the Maganacs]. Heero said "I'll kill Katrine," but he didn't use the most effective means. In other words, that [buster rifle] is his trump card, I suspect. The new buster rifle's shooting range and (destructive coefficient [#9]) had been pretty souped up. Like the old Wing Gundam, it employed a custom cartridge loading system and at maximum power, could shoot three times. And spare cartridges would allow for three shots a piece. However--. I tried calculating that in my head and even with the buster rifle's highest output, it wouldn't punch

through the triple layer electromagnetic defenses of the Neo Planet Defender. If consecutive shots were concentrated at the same place, it might be possible to destroy the outermost layer, but as long as the Virgo IVs and Epyon hadn't [yet] arrived, there was no way it could be a one-hit turn-around. With a more encompassing powerful attack, there would be no breaking through the triple layer electromagnetic field. Yet if it wasn't decided to [shot] continuously in the same instant [that the shooting was started]--.

"You can't do this.....I can."

Heero told me that long ago. He sure was the guy who could make the impossible possible. Well, all I could do now is see how good they were.

The Caped Misbehavior (lit: black-caped naughty boy) was still circling around the electromagnetic field, leading those mobile dolls around by the nose. Virgo IVs did not excel at hand-to-hand combat. On the other hand, with Zechs' Epyon closing in and fighting, he [note: or the Virgos?] would demonstrate his own specialty. You didn't need "ZERO"'s judgment to know Zechs would begin attacking the (prominent) Warlock, that was self-evident. At the same time as the white three-headed winged dragon flying pylon circles overhead fired, simultaneously Zechs' Epyon raised its beam sword overhead and went for Warlock. That was the moment Duo had been waiting for. From under the black cape, he pulled out what looked like a hand grenade and flung it into the sky. It was [actually] a spare buster rifle cartridge. Epyon's falling beam sword and Warlock's up-thrusting beam scythe colliding in the middle with a spark. Warlock caught Epyon's sword in a fixed position with a twist of his wrist. Without missing a beat, he used his other hand to pull out a second cartridge with a skillfulness that rivaled that of a true magician's, and like the first one, he threw it into the air.

"Oh, I get it, (there was that option, too)."

Heero's Snow White must have been up on the cliff aiming the buster rifle. 02PX-78DY point. That's probably the point from which he'd fixed onto his target. The three cartridges flying through the air began freefalling in the Virgo IVs triple layer electromagnetic field. A blinding beam of light shot straight from where I thought it would. Heero hit a buster rifle cartridge. The biggest output energy beam hit the first spare cartridge and there was a huge explosion. The outer most electromagnetic field and eight planet defenders were simultaneously destroyed. For all that "ZERO" had been involved [in calculating the shot], the marvelous (snipe) was truly unparalleled and of the greatest subtlety. I couldn't help being blown away by [Heero's] hitting that little detonator on the spinning, falling cartridge from that distance. But if he didn't do it like that, he couldn't have raised the power of the buster rifle to destroy the [electromagnetic] field [and the planet] defender. Two tenths of a second later, the second spare cartridge was hit by the energy beam and the second electromagnetic field disappeared. Another three tenths of a second later, the third was exploded and took out the last of the Neo Planet Defenders. The area was swallowed up in a flood of light from the violent plasma currents and red-hot torrents [from the explosion]. The Virgo IVs lost their best defenses. But they weren't such small potatoes that [the others] could ease up on the attack. Wufei was particularly merciless. At the same time the white three-headed winged dragon suddenly came down and changed modes to land as Nataka, he instantly went about destroying the Virgo IVs using successive attacks with the beam trident and the beam canon in the dragon hang. He was as fast as lightning. One suit left--only Zechs' Epyon survived. If Warlock showed its real power, it could easily pin [Zechs] down then and there. Duo, however, could not. He'd likely stopped moving for a second during the above mentioned explosion of light. But I couldn't hold that against him. Not because he's my son but because anyone who'd been right beside that explosive light [like he had been] would have done the same. That kid had played his part well beyond expectations. Zechs' Epyon changed into the red double-headed flying dragon mode and just flew off into the sky. Evidently, he'd decided to evacuate. Wufei's Nataka changed modes again to the mobile armor mode but even though he gave chase, there was no way he could catch up [to Zechs] with the severe damage to the exterior [that Nataka] now [suffered]. Neither of the "ZERO"s could come up with anything better than that.

"Mission all over..... [we] somehow managed to win."

Just then, an encrypted line of communication came from Wuife.

"This is Nataku.....I will finish the operation [alt: it's done]."

"Roger..... Master Chang, that was truly some splendid fighting."

"No, Lieutenant Commander Kathy.....I was weak."

"Impossible."

"Nataku didn't approve of/accept me."

"That's not true! I'm quite proud to have a superior officer blessed with valiant boldness such as [you] Master Chang."

"I'm returning to base now.....Kathy, could you get me some coffee when I get in?"

"Yes, gladly!" Kathy saluted with a face-splitting grin. "Oh, would you care for some sugar and milk?"

"Both please.....extra of both."

"Understood."

"Xie xie [#10]....."

After the monitor [feed] was cut, we were filled with a sense of relief.

"That was great....."

"Yeah.....just like you said, Wufei's Nataku won."

"It's not going to be that easy--" said a girl's voice from the communication device. Next, the smiling face of Miss Katrine appeared on the large screen of the main monitor. *"--since the Mars Federation's aerial tactics division will arrive shortly."* Hearing those words, Kathy immediately got on the controls and increased the enemy detection radar's area of (inspection).

"Confirmed..... fifty giant transport hoverships are approaching over the battlefield where Wufei and the others are." It was a means to win victory by strategy more than by tactics.

"You hacked the observation satellite, didn't you? If you did, the Mars Federation is watching the same footage so it's entirely within the realm of possibilities that its come to this." She looked like her big brother Quatre and how everything she said was absolutely right was sickening.

"....."

I was about to cut off the comlink without saying anything but [Katrine's] hacking had been superbly done: all operations [then] became ineffective/unresponsive.

"Oh, that's right.....there's no point to the security codes and secret lines." She smiled as she spoke, *"Between you and me, I put a lot of work into it, I did."*

"How many Mars suits are there on that hover craft?"

Before Kathy could answer, Katrine continued to speak unperturbed as she cleaned her glasses. *"There are ten unmanned flying Mars suits on each. So altogether that's five hundred machines."*

"Oh, is that so..... Aaaand incidentally, you're saying Wufei and them will round them all up."

"You all probably think I'm just a traitor but I want you to try to understand.....We need a Gundam and especially, Heero Yuy."

"Wasn't there a smarter way to go about it?"

Katrine put her glasses back on and her cool blue eyes flashed. *"This is how I'm doing it, naturally.....but the Mars Federation isn't an iron-clad thing, we cannot be stopped by [these?those?] runaway/reckless upper levels of military."*

"The unmanned flying Mars suits have been released from the transport hover crafts. Snow White, Warlock, and Nataku are beginning interception!!"

"Even if I believed you didn't order this.....why the hell did you contact us? It wasn't just to make excuses/explain."

"Actually, there is that, ha ha ha."

"Huh?"

"That was a joke.....I contacted you because two manekazaru guests will be arriving and I humbly wished to inform you prior to their arrival."

"What guests?"

"Please receive them with courtesy.....that is all."

The main monitor cut back to the feed from the observation satellite.

"P.S.....give my regards to Professor Hilde Schbeiker. Please tell her not to cause us too much trouble." She left one word too many [ALT: Katrine had just said too much.] It was common knowledge that I, as I am now, had no reason to say [anything] to Hilde. More important than that was the current state of affairs. Kathy and I started intently at the main monitor. It was a horrendous view. A large scale aerial battle was unfolding mainly in the gorge. Heero's Snow White, Duo's Warlock, and Wufei's Nataku furiously took on the five hundred Mars suits but it looked as though the fatigue from the successive battles (before) was accumulating. [And] the midrange buster rifles' ammo had been all used up. They could only use the beam sabers to cut down their enemies at close range. Even if Zechs' Epyon got caught up in the battle, it would have been one hundred to one. Either way, it would be a fierce battle. There's a saying that one man is a match for one thousands, but we didn't have enough fire power to actually [make that idiom true] 316/2/12-14. In the midst of a hard fight, the odds of defeat seemed certain.

That's when the rear gate opened. We were shocked when we turned around. Standing there was the masked second president of the Mars Federation and her assisting (officer).

"Relena."

"Peacecraft."

Madame removed her mask and let her soft hair stream elegantly down; her clear eyes stared steadily at us.

"Hello, how do you do, everyone?"

Kathy immediately made to move but I muttered for her to stop.

"Please, don't go to any trouble.....I have come with tea already prepared." Lucretia Noin, the assisting officer, produced a Royal Copenhagen tea set. During that time, Relena looked sadly at the desperate struggle unfolding on

the main monitor but she quickly looked away, shaking her head like she was in anguish.

“Hey-o! Don't suppose Madame President has the authority to stop this war, huh?”

“The President of the Mars Federation doesn't have as much authority as you believe. Furthermore, there are precious few who approve/support the (will to peace).”

“Huh.....so then, you came all the way here behind enemy lines to dress up and have tea time. You have some nerve, just as you always have.”

When Relena took a sip from the tea filled cup, a nostalgic smile played on her lips and she said, “I'm happy to see that you haven't changed, either.” That beauty that seemed to put/keep her above the rest and her high-mindedness/nobility were the same as ever.

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart, Father Maxwell, for taking care of Naina.” She looked like she had put on a few years but there was no change in her beauty. The worry-filled eyes and charming mouth were as Lucretia Noin had been back in the day.

“It's been a while.....what do you want with the base?” I didn't begrudge them [anything] but I just couldn't help the enmity in my voice. “Just so you know, we've got no intentions of abiding by total pacifism! Realizing a total, complete peace in this place is practically imp--“

“What about Heero?” Relena was staring straight at me. “His awakening was successful, wasn't it?”

“Yup.....his comprehension (lit: recognition/awareness) is way better than yours.”

“Thank you kindly.” Her polite words of thanks were entirely unexpected. And then, once she handed her tea cup to Lucretia Noin, she slowly passed right in front of us.

“.....”

We couldn't kill this Relena Peacecraft [ALT] This Relena Peacecraft could not be killed]. With the PPP ((Perfect Peace Program)) running now, it wasn't possible for anyone but Heero to do that [i.e. kill Relena]. Not even me, who during the winter after MC 15--when I had had my bike accident--had been injected with the “PPP” which had been called the [Mars] endemic [disease] vaccination 317/1/8-10 [#10.5]. Relena stood before the console behind Kathy. There, once she switched on the communicator, called Snow White.

“Heero.....” It was an average long distance line. “Heero, please respond.”

“It's no use.....Heero Yuy is currently running the “ZERO system”.”

And then, there was a response, Heero's face appeared on the screen.

“*This is Snow White.....what is it?*” He was supposed to be in the middle of battle but his calm face responded just like that.

“Heero.....” the pretty/pitiful girl's eyes had gotten wet; she looked happy from the bottom of her heart to be reunited with (her dear friend [#11]).....I missed you, Heero.....” Her hoarse voice wavered and she couldn't speak. A single tear traced down her cheek.

“*Sorry but I'm in battle right now.....could you just tell me what's so important?*”

“.....yes.” Relena wiped away her tear admirably and with gallant calm, spoke as though she were thinking deeply about what she said. “Heero.....please come quickly and kill me.” Her voice was calm. That was likely a suitable resolution. For however much Heero was the only one [to whom] that request [could be made], it was pretty sad to

deliver those words to the one she loved 317/2/8-9.

Heero, however, spoke with unchanging coldness, *"I've accepted that mission [already]. Once this fight is over, I'll carry it out immediately....."*

"....."

"But Relena, you won't make/let your battle end."

"My.....battle?"

"End communication."

Once again, the monitor returned to displaying the battle via feeds from the observation satellite. Relena seemed to be thinking about something there, her eyes downcast.

"Major Sally....." she slowly raised her head and spoke to Kathy who stood near.

"No, I'm her daughter, Lieutenant Commander Kathy Po, Madame President."

"I don't suppose I could receive a copy of the files that were used in the awakening of (this) "Aurora Princess"?"

"Father, would that be acceptable?" Kathy asked me.

"If you think all the answers are in the past, you'd be thinking wrong, yo."

Relena turned her resolute face towards me, "I understand.....But I, as I am now, cannot fight."

"Do you really think it's possible? Making "total pacifism" a reality?"

"It will be different from what has been, I believe it is possible for "New Total Pacifism" [to make total pacifism a reality]." The light of hope shone in those eyes.

"Okay, take it already."

"I give you my sincere apology and gratitude.....I'm sorry." It was only very slightly, but I had the sensation of my chest tightening. "Thank you, Duo." For just that last second, her (original) cute little girl smile returned. Gimme a break, you don't have to pull out the big guns for an old man like me. I think I'll pass. Right away, Lucretia Noin took the memory chip from Kathy and began copying it. On the monitor, the grim battle was being continued. But it looked like half the unmanned Mars suits had been destroyed. That's just what you'd expect from Heero and Wufei. And let's not forget (the activities of) my little (lit: expectation) ace and Special Officer First Class Zechs Merquise who, until just recently, had been an enemy. They had thrown themselves [fully] into the fight despite hampered by being in a state of extreme exhaustion 319/1/11-12<. Two hundred fifty suits left. They had passed their limit a long time ago. There, a dazzling golden light appeared over their heads. I knew that light.

"Cyrene Wind....." That was at Christmas four years ago. Lucretia Noin removed the memory chip that was done being copied and smiled gently at the dazzling light on the main monitor.

"Tallgeese Heaven, hmm....." In the midst of the golden light, a white mobile suit with beautiful angel's wings spread out had appeared.

"My brother has arrived, yes?" A smile played on Relena's lips, too. When I'd seen [the suit] before, I hadn't been able to confirm the whole body shape because of the glare of the light, but over the observation satellite monitor, I could see it clearly. There was no doubt that it was the successor to {Tallgeese}. Cutting through a thick layer of cloud, that white light descending to earth made me feel a sense of the sublime/divine. And the golden light circling

around the area was an energy ring that correlated to an enormous halo (lit: angel's wheel). All of a sudden, the second I thought that ring had expanded to its greatest extent, all two hundred fifty Mars suits were swallowed [in the light] and disappeared--

To Be Continued.....

#7 - Fat Max calls his son "ochoushimono" which means either: someone who gets off on flattery OR someone who matches his mood to that of his partner/opponent. It's probably the former. I'm just totally having fun with name calling for lots of these terms, since English lacks a single word (that I can think of) to embody these qualities.

#8 - this word to the Japanese apparently means just plain old "special" but the dictionary says foreigners would say what the Japanese call "special" is "suicidal." Yeah, this is a Japanese story written by a Japanese dude for a Japanese audience, BUT Sumizawa probably super aware of all the different nationalities and origins of all his characters... and most of the main characters don't even hale from Earth, so I decided to use that ugly "slash" and you can decide which fits better.

#9 - Okay, math fiends! I only vague recollect the term "coefficient" from my days in algebra and my initial "durp durp drup this is math" had me thinking of COSINE, not coefficient. Anyway, in the expression $(4x+y)$, the number four is the coefficient. I seem to recall this being more like any integer used when solving for whatever variables (and thus gets used on both sides of the equals sign in an equation). The definite of a PHYSICS coefficient, however, is this: a multiplier or factor that measures a particular property. I suppose, as far as buster rifles go, we're talking about physics more than algebra, aren't we? I never took physics, though so I'm not how well that definition fits.

#10 - This is Chinese, as such, I just wrote the closest I could approximate the pinyin (that's how you write Chinese in roman letters, except to be real pinyin, there ought to be descending accent marks over the 'i's). It just means "thanks."

#10.5 - Hey! Keep this in mind to compare against all the technospeak in the next chapter!

#11 - I guess I feel compelled to parse the language used to describe the dynamic between Heero and Relena and Heero and Duo (for obvious reasons). The words on the page say "dear person" which would probably be like "my dearest friend" type of language that no one TODAY really uses, but it was common around the turn of the last century (if Sherlock Holmes is indicative of speech patterns leastways). Relena, in Japanese in Frozen Teardrop, is EXTREMELY polite sounding. I wonder why I recall her sounding so DUMB in the English anime version...